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THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER



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EUNICE TIETJENS — 1937  
(Thora Averi, Miami)

# THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER

EUNICE TIETJENS

The whole world passes at my shoulder  
And all flesh does is to grow older.

*—Leaves in Windy Weather*

*New York*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1938

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EUNICE TIETJENS HEAD.

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All the characters in this book are real—none are fictitious. All persons are referred to and identified by their proper names and every word said about them is intentional.



TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER  
WILLIAM A. HAMMOND



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THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER



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## *At Fifty*

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AT THE age of fifty I am smitten with desire to set down certain things which I have seen and smelled and tasted: things that knock at the brain; things that pester me to be said. I am choked up with them as an irrigation ditch is choked with débris. For the water to flow clean again among the roots of living I must grub out the lot of them, get down in hip boots, and sweat. I dread the task somewhat, but the spirit like the earth has its necessities.

Most of these things concern me, as a person, very slightly. I was not an actor in them, I was only an observer. Perhaps those things in which I have been an actor have got rid of themselves in that way; at all events they trouble me little. It is the things realized but not released that stab me in the night, the memories of people, of exotic places, of the endless flowing gayeties and tragedies of existence.

Almost nothing that I remember vividly happened because of me: it is only that I was there to see it. The rebirth of poetry in the United States in the last twenty years owes little enough to me. China sat reflecting in her squalor, blowing her small whirlwinds of revolution in the dust of ages, long before I came there. The mountains owe me nothing. I did not cause the war. The incredible moons of North Africa and the silver

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blossoming of the stars of the South Seas bear no record of me.

And if these things and others appear here on the string of my own life it is only because I have no other string on which to prick them. Forget the string if you can, as one forgets what holds the beads together.

We possess somewhere a string made by a Tunisian sorcerer to weave a favorable charm and to avert the evil eye. It is made for the most part of the vertebrae of small fish, cleaned and dried in the sun. It ends in the Hand of Fatma, the hand with two thumbs, also made of fishbones picked out with red French beads. And strung along it are strange convoluted shells, a small bit of money, a curiously wrought fish of silver, an old pants button, a rusty key and a blob of veined turquoise. Such an oddly assorted chain will this string be. May it forfend the evil eye!

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# 1

## The String

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NEVERTHELESS, in thinking it over, I have made the somewhat disconcerting discovery that one must know something about the string before trusting the completed chain. The mechanics should be known before being disregarded. Testimony is only as reliable as its source.

So something shall be set down here about the days before I was born, which event I place at about the age of twenty-seven years. Before that I had slept pretty tranquilly through childhood and adolescence, even through marriage and the birth of two children. How I managed it I cannot now understand, but the fact remains.

Once or twice though I turned in my sleep.

The first time was on a sunny morning in school. It may have been in the sixth grade. My birth certificate reads Chicago, Illinois, July 29, 1884; but by the time this occurred we had moved to Evanston, Illinois, a pleasant wealthy stuffy suburb of shaded streets and nicely adjusted mentalities, a town where the amenities are paramount. The public schools are excellent and I, just coming to the colt stage, was this morning called upon to recite in literature class. We were studying the old poem by Thomas Campbell called "Hohenlinden."

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When it came my turn to recite we had reached the lines:

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,  
Who rush to glory, or the grave!  
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave,  
And charge with all thy chivalry!

"Now, Eunice," said the teacher, "tell us in your own words what this means."

Some premonition, some inner propulsion stirred vaguely in me in a dumb revolt. The back of my neck, under a mane of hair, grew hot. I can feel it yet. And though I was usually the most docile of pupils I did not answer. By no stretch of the childish mind could I have expressed the fact, which I must have known by instinct, that poetry is both sense and sound, inextricably one, and that to give the sense alone is to commit violation. On being further urged I brought forth inarticulately that it meant exactly what it said, that if the poet had meant to say it any other way he would have done so.

The teacher was nonplussed. "But," she protested patiently, "if you were saying this yourself you would not say it that way. Wouldn't you say 'The fight grows fiercer,' or something of the sort?"

"Nol" I answered, growing hotter and hotter, "I would not. If I wanted to say 'The combat deepens,' I would say 'The combat deepens.'" And I sat down amidst an amazed silence. Such was my first revolt.

A year or two later Marguerite Ogden Bigelow, afterwards Marguerite Wilkinson, came into my class, and in the vague half-understood way of childhood we bolstered each other up in our attitude towards life and our love for poetry. This friendship, the only vital one of my early youth, lasted till her strange fear-defying death. But at this time we were soon

## THE STRING

separated. The only boy I remember with any distinctness was Hugh Wilson, now Ambassador to Germany.

The next time I remember stirring was in Geneva, Switzerland. My father, who was a Chicago banker, died most tragically when I was thirteen. A year later my mother, an amazing person to this day when she is seventy-five, picked up her four children of whom I was the eldest and went to Europe. She had been a painter before her marriage, and now she intended to live in Paris and take up her art again. But we arrived during the Dreyfus trial. The town was full of soldiers and unrest. Students in roving bands passed under our windows singing "*Conspuez Zola, conspuez Zola, conspuez!*" and mother, mindful of the dire prognostications of Evanston as to what would happen to unprotected women and children in the wicked haunts of Europe, moved on to Switzerland.

The beauty of Geneva, the sliding pellucid waters of the lake and river dotted with shimmering gulls who were always hungry, the sharp mountains, as purely cut as mathematical formulae, the sea of mist visible from the top of the Salève when the sun sank on a frozen sea of rose-colored cloud and the whip of the wind coming down from the peaks—these things etched themselves into me even through the mistiness of sleep. I loved Geneva, and I breathed in it.

It was there, I think, that I first realized that I am a mountain person. For people seem to me to divide themselves into sea people, plains people, and mountain people. They belong, if they belong anywhere, in one of these three groups, and they come to their highest fruition where they belong.

In Geneva too the part of me which was to believe in poetry, to cling to poetry as an "unchanging value in a shifting world, stirred again. Somewhere I had annexed a book of selected readings, prepared doubtless for *jeunes filles*, which included the shipwreck scene from Byron's *Don Juan*, one of

## THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER

the few really "respectable" spots in the poem. It was my first taste of satiric poetry and it came as a revelation. I was sitting, I remember, on a couch as I read, and so carried away was I with amusement that I not only rolled on the couch but rolled off it to the floor. Hearing the thump, my mother came in and eyed me curiously. I showed her the lines and tried to explain, but the puzzled look in her eyes remained. Next birthday I demanded Byron and received him, in a red leather binding stuffed underneath with cotton so that it felt rich to my unsophisticated hand, and I read him from cover to cover. Very soon I saw that if mother had known what was really in *Don Juan* I should never have had him, and so I took care to be found reading only "She Walks in Beauty Like the Night," or at most *The Corsair*.

In Geneva too mother decided to make a painter of me, and took me with her to art school. She even took me on a trip for some weeks to Paris, where we studied at the Académie Julian, and later in Dresden I continued the lessons. I enjoyed them very much but I could not work the long hours required—I was only fifteen to seventeen—and I put in much of my time eating cakes and sitting down accidentally on other people's palettes. So, although my teachers said I had talent, mother decided that I had not the necessary application, and the lessons stopped. Nevertheless I had begun to learn from them to use my eyes, a thing many people never learn, and something that has stood me in excellent stead these many years.

Another shaping influence at that time was Professor Théodore Flournoy, though I am sure he was never aware of my existence. With mother I attended some courses at the University of Geneva, one under this eminent psychologist being included. From him I learned what has always been an underlying principle of my poetry, that the mind and the emotions



## THE STRING

can be studied as external phenomena at the same time they are being experienced. Perhaps Flournoy and Walt Whitman with his tremendous impersonal "I, I, I"—they are a strangely assorted pair, are they not?—were the spiritual parents of my belief that poetry of the human heart should always treat the individual emotion under its aspect as part of the race experience. I have never been shy of recording certain emotions which seem to embarrass others because it has seemed to me that I was recording humanity in terms of myself.

After two years in Geneva came Dresden and Wagneritis. By day I was at first preparing for college and afterwards—when I had at last persuaded mother that it was unnecessary for me to go back from Europe to shut myself up at Poughkeepsie, New York—I was taking the Froebel kindergarten course in the original school founded by "Father Froebel." But my heart was always in the evening and always at the opera, with occasional excursions to the Zwinger Museum where mother was copying Jan Vermeer.

And Wagner was God himself! He rolled over me, he encompassed me, he trampled on me. I forgot everything but Wagner. Poetry was his alliterative lyrics, and the only time I learned German gladly was when I was permitted to study them; music was his music only; drama was his drama; life was a pale reflection of his over-life-sized world. The only thing I resisted was the visual effect of the stage settings. A glimmer of sanity remained to me there.

He was a good master for a *Backfisch*, as young girls were then humorously called. The great theme, boldly envisaged. He understood that as few of our own generation understand it. Even today, when I know something of the difficulties of the stage, I am still overwhelmed by the magnitude of his many-sided genius. It is fashionable now for my musical friends to decry Wagner, to say he lacks clarity, to pick this

## THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER

and that flaw. Even my husband, Cloyd Head, whose theories would make such a synthesis as the music-drama an ideal end, finds in practice that the legs of the dragon disturb him to the point of laughter. And the illusion drops away from him. But for me, though I have seen Lohengrin fall careening down the steps when he first descends from the swan-boat, and the beard of the tenor playing Siegmund come off at a crucial point, the hero himself remains inviolate and above such accidents.

In Dresden I took another step in the ultimate direction. My first poem was published! Never again in this life, not even if I should take the Nobel prize for literature, could I experience the wild rapture with which I saw the funny little thing in print. The way of it was this.

During our stay there King Albert of Saxony was gathered to his fathers. He was rather a distinguished old man, human and hearty and much beloved by his subjects. They say he had innumerable illegitimate children. I had seen him many times riding abroad or sitting at the opera, which he loved and supported liberally. He died at some distance from Dresden at his hunting lodge, and later his body was brought back to the capital with impressive ceremony.

The train arrived at midnight. The way which the cortège must pass had been lined on both sides with great strings of immortelles, suspended from high posts and drooping gracefully between them in an endless chain. The top of each post formed a large classic flare, whose flickering light gave an eerie quality to the massed crowds. There were no other lights, but every church-bell in the city was tolling slowly and painfully.

When the cortège passed, the king's body lay in a catafalque on a great black hearse drawn by six coal-black horses which paced slowly, their heads surmounted by black plumes and

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their feet lifted high in the Spanish step. And before the hearse, carried in a heart-shaped box on a satin cushion by a man who walked in the Saxon colors of green and white, went the king's heart. This quaint custom originated, I believe, long ago when, after the death of one of the kings of the country, a pretender appeared. The man stated that he was in reality the king, that he had not died but had staged a mock death and burial for political purposes. After the ensuing difficulties had subsided, a law was made to the effect that after the death of each king his heart was to be cut out, thus insuring that no such claim could be made again. Strange as the sight of the heart was, it had for me an imaginative appeal. I remembered the heart of the Bruce.

We came home from the ceremony, I remember, on the street car. I sat in a corner, savagely warding off any attempts at conversation, and began to write a poem. I had been deeply moved, and something new and deep was rising in me. Mother saw it, and when we arrived at home she arranged quiet for me till I had finished. Then I showed her the result. To my surprise and dismay she said, "Put it in an envelope at once and send it to the *Stranger's Guide to Dresden*." "But—but, mother," I stammered, "it isn't good enough to be published!" "It is very good," said mother. "Go at once." And I went.

The *Stranger's Guide to Dresden* was a little sheet of only four pages published once a week in English for the foreign colony. Probably it is long deceased, but to me it will ever be of blessed memory. When it appeared on the following Saturday, my poem was in it; and not only that, it had been put in the exact center of the first page and surrounded by a heavy black border of mourning! Could anything have been more complete? I had been too timid to sign my name, but my initials, E. H., stood beneath it. When I heard later that one of the German papers had translated and reprinted it as a

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gesture of sympathy from the foreign colony, my cup was full. I saw myself as the great poet of the future, as Milton, Byron, and Keats combined. Alas for the dreams of youth! But they are sweet dreams, and it is well to have had them.

Mother, by the way, has a theory which will interest other women. She believes that not only does the mother influence the child while she is carrying it, but the child in turn influences the mother. As proof thereof she cites the fact that when she was carrying me, for the first and only time in her life she sat dreamily and attempted to write poetry, and that when she was carrying the others she had occupations which she feels came from the child's bent. What would the psychologists say about it, I wonder?

Perhaps this would not be a bad place in which to record something of the family in which I grew up.

I am of straight English—later New England—blood, with I believe only one Scottish great-great-grandmother as an admixture. My ancestors on both sides came to this country with the early settlers. Several generations before my birth they moved to the Middle West, then very primitive. They seem all to have been virtuous middle-class people, doctors, lawyers, farmers, and clergymen, with one governor among them. On my mother's side some seem to have been "brilliant" and some "queer." This for those who are interested in the effect of inheritance.

My father died too early for me to remember much of him, but my mother as I have said is an extraordinary person. In her youth she studied to be a painter, but put painting aside at her marriage. After father's death she took it up again and, though she never came to the full fruition of her talent because of the loss of her best years, she painted well enough to exhibit at the New Salon in Paris and in various exhibitions in this country, with much satisfaction to us all. She is a per-



IDEA L. HAMMOND, E. T.'S MOTHER



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son of tremendous vitality, both mental and physical, and a real force wherever she may be. Her greatest work is probably her children, and here she did an extraordinarily good job. In many ways I am the black sheep of the family.

There were four of us. I am the eldest. After me comes my well-beloved sister, the now distinguished missionary to China, Louise Hammond—have I said that my maiden name was Hammond?—whose name is known to everyone interested in her field. She is an accomplished musician (the British Museum having published some of her researches into Chinese music), a good poet in her own right, an adept at translating Chinese poetry, and has contributed to the *Atlantic Monthly*. Also she is a saint, though she does not like to have me say this. After her came Elizabeth, commonly called Peggy, a very fine violoncellist who played as soloist with several symphony orchestras here and in the Orient. She died in 1935. And last of all comes my brother Laurens Hammond, the inventor, who has to his credit the Teleview (a three-dimensional movie), the Shadowgraph (the only effect Ziegfeld ever used for more than one season in the *Follies*), the Hammond electric clock, the bridge table which shuffles cards, and most recently the new Hammond electric organ which makes sounds synthetically by electricity and can do anything which a pipe organ can do. He is young yet and may be expected to do still greater things. He has in many ways the most interesting mind which I have ever met. The family therefore encompasses within itself many divergent interests and has always been a fertile hunting ground for ideas. And mother is largely responsible for this.

But to return to Dresden. It was here too that I had my first introduction to Ibsen's plays, in a performance of *Ghosts* in which the amazingly gifted actor Josef Kainz played Oswald. The last scene, where Kainz seemed to shrink to half his size

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and to turn into a Mongolian idiot before my eyes, shook me to the roots of my being. Even after the lights and the curtain calls, when I attempted to rise to my feet my legs refused to hold me, and I was obliged to sit till the theatre was empty before I could control them.

I am telling here what remains to me. There were, I believe, certain young men in Dresden who loved me, and I may have loved them for aught I know, but they belonged to the pale outside world and are as shadowy as wraiths in my memory.

Two years of Dresden, and then came Paris. I was then nineteen.

In Paris the most important things that happened to me were two: I lost the conventional Christian faith in which I had been brought up, and I was married. The first I remember very distinctly, the second hardly at all, at least the ceremony. The sense of groping for the ultimate reality comes back to me most acutely in the graceful alleys of the Luxembourg Gardens where I wrestled with man's oldest problem and came out whipped. I can still see the placid Reine Berthe, with her high sculptured bust, looking down at me from her pedestal as I wrestled.

In Paris too I saw Isadora Duncan dance for the first time, and caught a far glimpse of another world of wonder and beauty. She danced I remember at the Trocadéro, a vast ugly barnlike structure on which the stage with its single moving figure was at most a point in the general dismal surroundings. We came in late and sat down near the front. When Isadora appeared she was barelegged. I had never seen, nor had anyone else, bare legs on the stage. And Isadora's feet and legs were heavy and ugly; moreover she had fallen, and on one knee was a great sordid scab as big as a dollar. I had been trained to be aesthetic, and I shuddered at the sight.

But she had not been dancing five minutes before such



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defects ceased to exist and that warm exultation came over me which I have known at rare intervals in the presence of great art. The younger generation, who have from infancy seen scantily clad girls flinging their limbs about in "aesthetic dancing," can have no adequate realization of what it meant to see for the first time the human form come alive under their eyes; to see the gestures of the Greek vases, which hitherto had been mere abstractions, become living things, flowing and moving in a pattern of rippling beauty, and dryads and nymphs peer and skip through an imaginary forest. Perhaps Uday Shan-Kar, with his grace of a shining leopard and his deep mystical appeal, may light up the heart of them in the same way. But no follower of the classic dance.

7 But the end of Isadora that evening was, oddly enough, as  
12 trivial as the beginning. When she came out to make her  
16 curtain call she suddenly lost all the impersonal majesty of  
5 her dancing, and came mincing and prinking out, unutterably  
2 silly, to kiss her hands and dandle herself before our eyes. It  
9 was a cold shower of futility. Nevertheless, and though I often  
saw Isadora and her brother Raymond on the streets of Paris,  
clad in dirty and carelessly worn Greek costume and looking  
as unlike the sculptured precision of the greater Greeks as can  
T well be imagined, still the revelation remained and refused  
9 to be touched.

5 That winter was for me pretty much occupied with con-  
1 certs, art exhibits, dances, and some study at the Collège de  
France and the Sorbonne. Yes, and with courting. In the  
month of May, in the American church, I was married to Paul  
2 Tietjens, an American composer of music, best known as com-  
2 poser of the extravaganza *The Wizard of Oz*, which he had  
done in Chicago before coming to Paris, with L. Frank Baum  
and W. W. (Hippocampus) Denslow, a delightful old reprobate who looked like a walrus.

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That was the end of Paris for that time.

After a few weeks in London, of which I remember exactly nothing, we crossed to the United States and went for the summer to Macatawa in Michigan to be near Baum. He and Paul Tietjens were trying another musical comedy.

L. Frank Baum was a character. He was tall and rangy, with an imagination and a vitality which constantly ran away with him. He never wrote fewer than four books a year, two Oz books and two which were published under another name. Constantly exercising his imagination as he did, he had come to the place where he could honestly not tell the difference between what he had done and what he had imagined. Everything he said had to be taken with at least a half-pound of salt. But he was a fascinating companion.

He was never without a cigar in his mouth, but it was always unlit. His doctor had forbidden him to smoke, so he chewed up six cigars a day instead. There was one exception to this. Before he took his swim in the lake in the afternoon he would light a cigar and walk immediately into the water. He would solemnly wade out till the water was up to his neck and there walk parallel with the shore, moving his arms to give the impression that he was swimming. When a wave splashed on the cigar and put it out he at once came in and dressed.

His house was full of the most remarkable mementos of the time when it had been necessary for him "to rest his brain," following a stroke of facial paralysis. He had painted the walls with stenciled designs; he had made a sign of wrought iron and painted wood for the dooryard, "At the Sign of Father Goose"; he had made furniture; he had written a small book of poems (!), had set it up in type himself, printed and bound it by hand. Last of all, because all this had not yet rested his brain enough, he had made an elaborate piano arrangement

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of Paul's music for *The Wizard of Oz*—though he was no musician it was pretty good—had then figured out the system by which pianola records were made, and had cut a full-length record of this arrangement out of wrapping paper! This seems to have done the trick, and he was presently back at work.

Although the two men worked hard that summer, nothing came of the musical comedy they were writing, and by autumn Paul and I were living in New York. In spite of his spectacular success with the *Wizard*, Paul Tietjens never succeeded in getting another major production, though there were various smaller interludes and once we went on the road for a week with a vaudeville company which was playing an operetta of his. He has never had his just recognition as a composer of serious music either: some fate has seemed to dog him. We trained about with various artists and musicians, Charles and Alice Beach Winter, Paul Cornoyer, Henry Holden Huss, and others, and at times with the old intellectual radical group, with Leonard Abbott of *Current Literature*, Ryan Walker the cartoonist and his wife Maud, Art Young and some of the *New Masses* people. We did not, oddly enough, know many theatrical people—at most Cleveland Moffett and Charles Frederick Nirdlinger. And of course Fred Stone and his wife. We lived on the royalties of the *Wizard*, which was still playing in the smaller towns.

For myself I was completely occupied with domesticity. We soon had two little girls—the older, who died when she was four years old, named Idea for my mother, and Janet, precious child, now grown and married in Chicago. As I look back on it today it seems to me that I slept through those six years more soundly than through any period of my youth. Although I wrote a little art criticism for some of the magazines I had no real life of the spirit. I did, it is true, write some verse half-

## THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER

heartedly, futile stuff, mostly lyrics and below the threshold of criticism. But I do not believe they caused me even to stir in my sleep. Paul Tietjens said they were "very pretty," and a newspaper or two printed them. But it was superficial and unreal, nor did I meet a single soul who knew the first principles of verse writing. If Fate had not taken a hand I should be sleeping yet.

But Fate did take a hand. My marriage, after the first three or four years, was not a success. Paul Tietjens and I grew farther and farther apart, and finally, about a year after Idea's death, I took the three-year-old Janet and went to Evanston. Mother had returned after some years in Paris and was again living in our own house, next door to the palatial residence of Charles G. Dawes. I stayed with her, and I conducted a kindergarten in French for the scions of the wealthy. It was interesting, but it left me unsatisfied.

But the first far glimmerings of birth were upon me. It was Henry Kitchell Webster, the novelist, who started it, I think. If he sees anything from the far world to which death has recently called him, I should like him to know that I am still grateful to him. Harry and his wife Mary adopted me as a friend, and their son Kitchell was in my kindergarten. Harry, though he belonged to quite a different school of writing from my own and many of his literary beliefs said nothing to me, was a serious craftsman, a man who knew his business thoroughly and took it as a profession. Moreover he had a real genius for friendship, that rare and beautiful quality which one meets as seldom as genius of any sort.

When spring came and the kindergarten was over for the summer, I took stock and decided that for me teaching was not the answer. I had always wanted to write, and now I would attack it in earnest. I took the few and scattered attempts

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I had made to Harry and asked him if there was any hope for me. After reading them, he said there was, that he believed I could be taught, and he would teach me.

So mother took Janet off with her to Maine for the summer and I settled down in a Chicago boarding house to learn to write, adventure stories being the immediate lesson in hand. All week I would write diligently, and on Saturday I would repair to the Websters in Evanston for the week-end. Harry, his delightfully ungainly long body walking stiffly up and down the room and his pipe always alight, would struggle with my copy, would pass it or refuse it. They were growing days for me, and I made progress. But Harry knew little of poetry, and that side was still a blank.

It was quite a different set of people, headed by quite a different man, who finally brought me to full birth. I was then twenty-seven, I think, though my time sense is hopelessly inadequate. Not many people surely remember with such absorbing accuracy as I can the exact moment of their awakening. Many of course never come to any second birth at all, and for those who do it must take place in various ways; but though for me it naturally took several years to reach completion, it began in a sudden and definite blaze.

I remember the room in which it took place with almost painful distinctness. It was a very small room in an apartment in Rogers Park, Chicago, and it was lined on all sides with books which reached to the ceiling. In the space between bookshelves there was room only for a couch, a chair or two, and a few feet of space in which to move about.

This room was in the apartment of Margery Currey and her then husband Floyd Dell, at that time literary editor of the *Chicago Evening Post*. I had met the Dells through Martha Baker, the miniature painter, and cottoned to Margery at

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once. She is another person with a genius for friendship—she and Harry Webster and Mary Mowbray-Clarke of the late Sunwise Turn bookshop in New York being the three most gifted people in that line whom I have known. Now she had invited me to dinner and to meet George Cram Cook, then assistant to Floyd on the *Post*.

George, or Gig Cook as his friends called him, had at that time not yet become the leader of the Provincetown Theatre in New York, nor yet come to his most fitting end as a Greek peasant on the slopes above Delphi. He was just short of forty, with a remnant of the great beauty of his youth; a somber personality much of the time yet lit at moments with an almost cosmic gayety; a good male drinker, as Susan Glaspell has so understandingly pointed out in her *Road to the Temple*, and with a queer ability to cast out shadows.

After dinner on this vital evening we repaired to the little room which was Floyd Dell's study. There Margery and Floyd curled up on the sofa, Gig alternately sat or paced the step or two of free space, with a pipe in his mouth and an inalienable dignity about him, and I sat translated.

For the talk ran on poetry. For the first time in the many years of my long sleep I heard what had been like a secret vice with me brought out boldly into the open, with no apology, as though it were indeed one of the great facts of existence.

"Here," said Floyd, "do you remember this?" And he put up a lazy hand, without otherwise moving, plucked down Swinburne, and began to read in a rather light but beautiful voice the chorus from "Atalanta in Calydon":

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces . . .

"And here," said George Cook, taking a book from a high shelf. And he too read in a deep voice full of shadows, this

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time the part about death from Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd":

Come, lovely and soothing death . . .

And Margery added Middleton, whom few now remember, and we had out Richard Hovey and Byron and Shelley and so many others that we could hardly have moved in the tiny room had not Margery, who is very tidy, risen to put them back in their places.

So we sat till two o'clock.

Afterwards I walked home through the dark streets of Evanston. And I walked on air, like one warm with champagne, though I had had no alcohol except of the spirit. Poetry, I cried to myself, is not a dead thing, something that is shut in books to dress library shelves and is taught to school children, something to be given away at Christmas or bought shyly and read in one's own room as one might take drugs, and never, never spoken of because nobody cares. Poetry is a live thing. I am not alone in the world today, nor am I touched by the sun. Poetry is alive! And I danced in the streets and sang to myself, thereby causing a most unpleasant person to speak to me. But from that evening some floodgate had broken in me and I was beginning to be awake.

It is odd, now I think of it, that this should have happened to me in just this way, but it did.

Afterwards I took my own feeble efforts at verse to these people and asked for help. It was George Cook who said the thing that released me, as the right thing said at the right moment has the power to do. "You have been too much pre-occupied with technique and with little things," he said. "Your technique is good enough, but you are afraid. Take a great theme and attack it boldly. You will manage."

So I did, and in my degree I managed, and I began to have

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an inner vital life. It did not of course concern only poetry. A year or two later Edgar Lee Masters gave me a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita* and so changed the whole course of my spiritual existence. Yet in the main beauty, as exemplified in poetry, provided the mainspring.

This then is the preliminary history of the string. After this we will forget it as much as we can.



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### I Join *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*

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BEGINNING in 1912 with the appearance of Harriet Monroe's magazine, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, Chicago became for a few years the functional center, the fountain-head, of the art of poetry in this country, indeed in the English-speaking world.

The beginnings of course were tentative, but in the short space of a year or two it had found or helped develop a group of poets headed by the great middle western triumvirate Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Vachel Lindsay. Others were Arthur Davison Ficke who, though he lived in Davenport, Iowa, was much in Chicago and belonged in spirit with the group, Alice Corbin Henderson, Harriet Monroe herself, Agnes Lee, Helen Hoyt, Cloyd Head, Maxwell Bodenheim, Frances Shaw, Edith Wyatt, Florence Kiper Frank, from time to time Alfred Kreymborg, occasionally Sherwood Anderson, and others, besides myself.

It was a great creative period, and we knew it at the time for what it was. A new vitality was being born in American poetry after a long winter of lying fallow. There were isolated voices elsewhere which presaged the movement, which belonged with it. There was Edwin Arlington Robinson, whose wise human penetrating voice, speaking in its quiet cadence,

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had paved the way; there was Robert Frost, who at about this time had published *A Boy's Will* in England, but whose more mature work, then beginning, had found no American audience; there was sturdy obstreperous Amy Lowell, breathing forth revolt as the mares of Diomedes breathed fire, and Sara Teasdale, a beautiful, frail, but deeply human spirit, then beginning to find her true voice; there was Rabindranath Tagore, whose first poems in English were sent us by Ezra Pound from London and printed in *Poetry*, and who soon after appeared in person in Chicago for many fertile months; and there were always the passionately devoted, passionately scolding letters from Ezra Pound in England, letters that seemed to me to be part pure genius, part naughty little boy, and part charlatan.

All these people, and many more, rallied to us at once and were with us, either by letter or from time to time in person.

But the Chicago group was the focal point. It had the united vitality that a strong local movement has always had in the arts. And *Poetry* was at once the clearing house, the Mother in Israel, and the magnet which held it all together. Life at the magazine office was a spiritual adventure and sometimes a physical one.

For myself, I came on the staff as office girl and general nuisance about a year after the magazine started. None of us can quite remember just when it was, though I dare say my first pay-check, appallingly small, would be recorded in the old checkbooks if they still exist. Harriet Monroe always tried to engage only accepted poets on the staff, even in minor capacities, and it was because she had accepted one or two poems of mine, the first fruits of my rebirth, that I was admitted. I succeeded Helen Hoyt in the very small position I then occupied. Now, after twenty-three years or so of being connected with the magazine in one capacity or another, I am the oldest mem-

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ber of the staff, the only one left from the early days. All the others who were in at the beginning have been blown away by the winds of circumstance. Two or three years ago Harriet said to me: "One of my advisory board has resigned so as to be eligible for the big yearly prize. Do you want to resign also? You would surely deserve it." But I answered: "Harriet, as long as *Poetry* and I both exist I shall be part of it. And as for prizes, I would rather give them than receive them." So that is settled.

Never shall I forget the feeling of awe with which I first set foot in the little office on Cass Street which was the physical seat of so much vitality. It had once been the old-time "front parlor" of a private residence, now become an office building, and the white marble fireplace, doubtless once the center of social formality, had by the alchemy of change now become the very opposite, giving a mood of informality and humanity to the place which set it apart at once from other offices. But even without it *Poetry* could never have seemed entirely commercial. It has never attained to the sort of frozen and deliberate informality which the offices of the large commercial magazines and publishers in the East have developed, where authors feel at once subtly flattered by so much magnificence and properly subdued to their status as mere feeders of the printing press. *Poetry* has always been a homelike place, cluttered with books in every available spot—since there has never been space enough or time enough among the short-handed staff to cope with the endless stream of them—crowded with desks and filing cases and at times actually littered with stray poets. I remember Floyd Dell saying once that he had to brush a poet off his desk every day at the old *Chicago Evening Post* before he could begin work. On *Poetry* we were in a far more delightful state even than this.

My own work at first consisted of the purely mechanical

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details of taking care of subscribers, writing letters for Harriet, and the like, though I was soon permitted to do the very first reading of manuscripts. But everything about it was a delight to me who had done routine office work before. When a letter was marked "p" this meant that it was to be filed under "Poet" and not "Patent," and when it was marked "Ac. po. biog." it meant that the biography of a new star was being filed for reference. All this was thoroughly satisfying to me.

I had at first most to do with my immediate superior, the associate editor, Alice Corbin Henderson. Alice was small, crisp, and incisive, full of an enduring energy in spite of a frail physique, and a thorough-going modern with an unfailing ear for the cadence of a new voice. Much of the attitude of the magazine towards the experimentation in new technique which was then beginning is due to her. She plugged wittily and indefatigably for the new, the untried. She was more susceptible even than Harriet herself to the possibilities of the future. She was the first of us who truly grasped the quality of the Imagists, then beginning in London, and of the elliptical school of which T. S. Eliot became the most noted protagonist. As for me I loved the Imagists at once, but the elliptical school was for a considerable time beyond me. "But, Alice," I remember expostulating on one occasion, "I don't understand in the least what this poem means, what it is trying to say." Alice grinned up at me her impish smile. "Do you need to?" she asked. "Neither do I exactly; but it's beautiful, and it opens doors in my head. That's enough for me."

And she was unfailingly good to me, who was timid and doubtful yet and deeply impressed by the value of the courage and insight which went into the making of the magazine. All those early years I felt that it was in some way magic ground—as indeed it was. And Alice accepted me as an equal,

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in spite of scolding me roundly at times, and spent much time on my poetic education.

Alice's active connection with the magazine was unhappily broken—in 1916, I think it was—because she contracted tuberculosis, and she and her painter husband William Penhallow Henderson, with their talented but uncontrolled child, "Little Alice," moved to Santa Fe, where they have resided ever since. Alice has recovered to all practical purposes, but she would not now return to the rigors of Chicago if she could. The beauty of the Southwest is in her blood, the great desert stretches, the snow-capped mountains, the piled pueblos, and the patient Indians.

Nothing that ever happened on the magazine brought quite so sharply to me the sense of the passing of time as one day, perhaps twelve years later, when the young woman who was then occupying my own first clerical position said to me: "Here is a letter for someone named Alice Corbin Henderson, but I can't find a card for her. Do you know who she is?" Alice, whose taste is permanently stamped on the magazine, not only in the green color of the bound volumes—which color she put through in spite of opposition and which seemed then amazingly brilliant—but in the very warp and woof of it! Did I know who Alice was? Alas for the quiet sifting of the dust of time!

I have spoken of Alice first because, as I say, she was my immediate superior and in the beginning I saw far more of her than of the somewhat austere Miss Monroe who sat behind the supreme editorial desk. It took time for me to realize how deeply human and warm-hearted Harriet Monroe was, beneath her often prickly exterior. She grew less austere, less prickly with time, but even to the end there were moments when she froze the blood of the unknowing. I have seen her look up

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over her glasses at some timid young thing who had with inward quaking offered a distilled essence of soul for her editorial consideration, and blast him, or her, with a caustic criticism so devastating that visibly the edges of his soul seared and curled, like the edges of an egg frying in too hot a pan. It has been one of my tasks all the years of my connection with the magazine to soften and tone down in the visiting poets these unexpected attacks of severity that sometimes seized her.

But it was also part of Harriet that she was conscious that she did this, and I have seen her realize suddenly what she was doing and undo it swiftly with a sure sympathy that wiped out the sting completely. Or if I whispered to her, "Harriet, you are prickling again!" she would jump to her feet, go after the retreating poet and make amends, perhaps even invite him to lunch and make a lifelong friend of him. Never have I known anyone with both capacities so strongly developed. It made working with her a perpetual adventure.

I had the clue to her, however, before I went to *Poetry*, given me by Sara Teasdale, whom I had met through correspondence with Zoë Akins. And here I want to digress and go back a bit to tell about Sara. The year before, I had spent the summer at Charlevoix, Michigan, teaching a private kindergarten for the numerous grandchildren of Mrs. Daniel Burnham, widow of the architect. Sara was spending the summer there also, at her father's home, and we cemented an enduring friendship. She is dead now, tragically, but even death cannot kill friendship.

We spent nearly every afternoon walking together in the woods or by the lake; more often still we rowed or punted in a rowboat on the shallow stream. We would sit for hours talking of the wellsprings of poetry, or of the people we knew, or of the varying moods of nature. I have never known anyone so sensitive to certain aspects of nature as Sara, or more influ-

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enced by them. It is visible in her poetry everywhere. But she always talked concretely, of the wild plants by the stream bank which she knew by name every one, of the lake and its various personalities, "the unchanging, everchanging sea," or of the stars, which were all individual friends of hers. Indeed she used to keep a big chart of the heavens on her bedroom wall on which she had always pricked the positions of the planets. She seemed never to talk in the abstract, never to trouble herself about the difficulties of formal thinking. She had a touchstone of her own and she seldom varied from it.

In the evenings, when it was warm enough, we often sat in a little summer-house built over the bluff beside her father's home, looking over the lake where the small moon went down into the waters and the breeze sang past us. I could scarcely see Sara then, but her voice came from the shadow, warm and clear, speaking with a depth of human understanding and a beautiful spiritual honesty that lifted me into another world. She was passionately devoted to the poetry of Sappho, though she chose not to believe the stories of her sexual aberrations and held it a great pity that the memory of the greatest woman poet of antiquity should be so smudged in the popular mind. But she knew every scrap that remains to us of Sappho's writings and used to recite them lovingly in the darkness and to speak of evenings on Mitylene by the sea before Sappho made her tragic leap, warm evenings now become cloudy with legend, when Sappho would recite her poems and the other poets answer, and the clear light of pure beauty shone from the spirit as well as the stars.

Sara was always frail in body, needing a quiet life, needing to rest long hours of every day. She was the child of her parents' old age—there were, I believe, sixteen years between her and the next youngest of the several children—and she seems to have been born without much physical vitality. But much of

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the beauty of her spirit came from this fact, and in the long quiet hours of solitude her very self grew and took root.

She was capable too of sudden moments of exaltation when she seemed to give off a palpable light of some inner ecstasy. On these moments she fed later in her solitude. Unexpected things often produced them, sudden beauty most often, or an unexpected meeting with a friend, or even at times a quick intellectual stab of understanding. Well do I remember one such moment.

I was at this time deeply interested in evolution—having had all arts and graces in my youth, I was just awakening to the sciences and taking them hard—and I had given her a small volume to read containing an outline of the theory. She was much interested in it, though as she said it was somewhat out of her line. One day while it was still fresh in her mind, on one of our walks we came upon an old jawbone, of a sheep perhaps or a donkey, with teeth attached. There had been various pictures of dentition in the volume, and Sara pounced upon the bone at once with an intensity of interest that surprised me. We tried to figure the thing out according to the book, but were both too intensely ignorant to make anything of it. Suddenly Sara began to shine with her rare light. Squatting in the dirt in one of the lovely gray gowns she always wore—she was always exquisite in everything that belonged to her—she began to speak of the blaze of hope for mankind that the concept of evolution gives when one first grasps it. Then she stopped, and looking up at me with her shining face she said: "Eunice, let's find a piece of paper and take this bone home!" But the picture of the none-too-savory jawbone of a modern donkey in Sara's dainty boudoir was too much for me. I burst into laughter. The light went out of Sara's face, and with a ruefully humorous expression she rose and dusted herself off.



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Perhaps I did her a wrong. I never heard her speak of evolution again.

But to return to Harriet Monroe. It was, as I say, Sara who gave me the clue to her that summer. "Harriet," she said, "needs love. You must love her, and if you do all will be well." And she quoted what someone had said of Sappho,

Thou must love her, ere to thee  
She will seem worthy of thy love.

So when I went to *Poetry* the next year I was prepared. I should have loved Harriet anyway—everyone who knew her really well loved her—but it made the approaches easier. Alice Henderson said something to me too, soon after I arrived. "Working with Harriet is like swimming in a sea which has warm and cold currents. One never knows where one is. Sometimes the current is all warm, and then in a single moment it is all cold and one does not know how it happened." And that was true too, except that, whenever one really needed the warm current and cried for it, it was always there.

Harriet all those years was the Mother in Israel to hundreds of young poets. She encouraged them, helped them with their work, published them when nobody else would, fed them when they were hungry and loaned or gave them money which she could ill spare herself. I used at times to be furious with the way they imposed on her generosity. Three of them at least to my own knowledge came to her and told her they were about to commit suicide if she did not give them considerable sums of money. And of course she did. If they had known what her salary then was, perhaps they would not have done it. Only one of these was of the slightest real importance as a poet, and that infuriated me still more. One

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would gladly starve oneself to feed Keats, but why preserve the poetasters at the expense of Harriet Monroe? Especially when I knew very well that they would not really kill themselves. But Harriet could not see it my way, and I know that later, when I had made myself clear on the subject, she took them away from the office to give them money so I would not know it.

She was, however, strictly impersonal in her judgment of anyone's work. No amount of personal affection would make her take a poem she didn't think good enough. And on the other hand I have seen her making up the magazine, giving the coveted place of honor, the lead, to a certain poet, and seen her look up from correcting proof to say, "Ugh! How I hate that man!" without desisting from honoring him.

Nor was she capable of bearing rancor towards any of them. There is a certain story I sometimes tell which she forbade me once to tell again, "Because," said she, "I do not bear rancor for the simple reason that I cannot remember. It is all a question of bad memory." But I know better, and I will not be mastered at my own typewriter! So you shall hear it, and anyone who knows that it is the inner spirit which dictates what shall be remembered and what forgotten will agree with me.

One morning—I think it was during the second year of the magazine—I opened a letter for Harriet from one of the young American expatriates then living in London. In view of the sequel let it be said at once that it was *not* Ezra Pound, who was most prominent among them. As I was permitted to read interesting magazine mail, I read this—and my blood froze. It was the most uncontrolled, savage, and vituperative screed I have ever seen. The man might have spared himself the trouble by writing simply, "I am a bad-tempered ass." Only then one might not have believed him!

It seems that Harriet, who had befriended him early and



HARRIET MONROE IN 1926  
(Rayhuff-Richter, Chicago)



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had printed the first poems of his to be printed anywhere, had recently returned to him a proffered group of poems. They were not up to his own standard, she thought; but I believe she did not say this, but said instead that the files were very crowded at the moment and she was accepting very little, which was also true. It is difficult to find the right phrase with which to refuse poems twenty times a day! This letter was in reply to her refusal. It opened without address and stated that he hoped her file was crowded with *poetry* but he doubted it, because a careful perusal of the magazine showed that she had never printed anything which even remotely resembled poetry except what he and his friends had sent her from London. And it went on winding up and up till he referred to our "pork-packing guarantors," called Harriet herself an "old maid," and ended by saying genially, "Go to hell and be damned to you!" One could see how the pen had spluttered, tearing the paper and spattering ink as he jabbed out the last line.

I took the letter to Harriet, waiting I knew not what angry reply. She read it. She made a wry face, and she sighed. Then she said perplexedly, "It really is hard to deal with poets sometimes!" And that was all. Nor did I hear her mention the letter again.

A year or two later, when I returned from China—but on second thought I shall leave the rest of the story till its proper place.

It would be quite wrong, however, to conclude that Harriet was one who lay down under provocation. Quite the reverse. She was a born fighter, as many a man discovered to his discomfort, a little dynamo of determination. Her crisp incisive prose attacks on careless or prejudiced thinking with regard to the poets, who were always her darlings, have done much for the cause of the art in America. And during the early years she had great need for this determination. It is hard even for

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me to remember, in this day when if a poet chooses he may write without complete sentences, without capitals or punctuation, even without recognizable sense, and no voice raised even to mention the fact—it is hard to realize how savage was the attack on *Poetry* when we first printed the crystalline jade-hard poems of the Imagists, those little bits many of which might have come from the Greek anthologies or from the Japanese. We were mocked in every conceivable fashion. Pieces of prose from the *Congressional Record* and like sources were chopped up into little bits and printed derisively as imagist poems. The poems themselves were printed backward, even printed upside down in mockery. And a storm of criticism arose which used up many gallant forest trees in paper pulp. Harriet enjoyed it all, like the almost extinct war-horse. She answered many of the critics with a pen of vitriol; she lectured, she scolded and defended. And in the end she won out. The Imagists flourished and had their day, and if the fashion has gone past them now it is because they have been absorbed, not beaten down.

Harriet had plenty of physical courage too. A tiny person who reached no higher than my shoulder, she could be positively devastating in action. I had proof of this one day not long after I came to the magazine. The old office on Cass Street was, as I have said, in a converted private house, and this house had been taken as an overflow by the American Bankers, an organization which had large offices facing on another street and backing against the building. One of the heads of the organization was a guarantor and gave us the office at a purely nominal rent. But we were the only office in the building, the rest being given over to shipping rooms and the like which were only occasionally occupied. So we were quite isolated. On the morning of which I speak Harriet and I were alone in the place when a drunken man entered, a tramp, unwashed

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and primitive, with a lowering malcontented face and great hams of hands. He offered Harriet some verses written on a dirty piece of wrapping paper. She read them and in her usual direct way told him that they were rambling doggerel and she had no time for such things.

It is still at times disconcerting to me, who have come to think of poems as impersonal works of art, to realize how savagely their authors will fly to their defense, like a mother wolf whose children have been attacked. Indeed a poem is to many people more than a child, it is a piece of their own soul. And dealing in souls is difficult. If a man makes a pair of shoes he has learned in the hard school of experience to take it somewhat calmly if he is told that the shoes do not fit. But many a person, if told even in the most tactful way that his poems are inadequate, will fly into an uncontrollable rage that is terrifying. And on this occasion there is no denying that Harriet was not tactful.

The drunken tramp's face became redder than ever; he made inarticulate noises in his throat which developed shortly into a stream of foul language, and he rose to his feet and leaning over Harriet shook his great ham fist under her nose as she sat at her desk. I thought he was going to strike her and was terrified. He was at least twice as big as she was, and there was no help within call.

But I didn't know Harriet. So quickly that I hardly grasped what was happening an answering rage sprang up in her. She seemed to throw off sparks like a radio sending station. In a single gesture she had sprung to her feet right at the man; she was waving her own tiny fist under his bulbous nose and she was telling him in no uncertain terms to get out, and get out quick! Her eyes were blazing coals. It was like watching a weasel attack a bear cub. The man was so startled at this unexpected sally that instinctively he gave back. Harriet pursued

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him and gave him no second to recover, but drove him backward out the door and slammed it in his face. It all happened in less time than it takes to tell it, but the man remained for at least an hour, at first pounding on the door and afterwards shaking his fist outside the window and promising dire consequences. Harriet had forgotten him long before he left. After that the American Bankers had a large bronze gong installed in the office which we might ring in emergencies to call for help. But we never used it.

The only other time I saw Harriet in a similar rage I was the unfortunate receiving end of it. It came about in this way. At the time *Poetry* was founded she was art critic on the *Chicago Tribune*, and she continued to occupy this position for a year or so after the magazine was running. But she was by no means as successful at the job of art critic as she was at criticizing poetry. In poetry she knew whereof she spoke, since she was herself a truly authentic poet, though her fame as editor somewhat overshadows her poetry in the popular mind—most unfortunately, I think. But her knowledge of painting and sculpture was purely academic, and her somewhat Olympian critiques angered the artists and produced much bad feeling. Moreover, though Harriet was kindness itself when one worked for her, as an employee she must have been rather difficult to handle. At all events her relations with the *Tribune* were broken off with considerable acrimony on both sides.

Thereafter the *Tribune*, for some reason known only to itself, installed Ronald Webster, Henry Kitchell Webster's younger brother who was at that time taking a flyer in journalism, as both art and music critic. Ronald knew as much (no more) of art and music as any intelligent young college graduate who has heard much talk at home. I think the *Tribune* liked him because he wrote gayly and with insouciance, making no pretense to knowledge; but the creative



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artists in the town were appalled, as well they might be. One day I happened to tell Ronald about *Blast*, that dramatic shout that came from London just before the war, and the strange pictures in it. He cottoned to the idea at once and asked to see it, so that he might write a story. I was too innocent to sight trouble and told him to come to the office and look at it. He came.

We were just looking at it together when Harriet entered, and I told her the tale. To my horror she flew into a fine rage. She literally snatched the magenta-colored apple of discord from Ronald's hands, and she withered the two of us, but particularly me, with a scathing invective that quite froze my blood. *Blast* was her property and not mine, and she would do nothing, nothing—did I hear?—to help the *Tribune* art critic in any shape or manner! With much more of the same sort.

But this incident did nothing to injure our friendship. Indeed it finally turned out to Harriet's advantage, because in the midst of her rage she conceived the idea of doing such an article herself, for the Sunday edition of the rival paper. When she had done so, and a two-page spread had appeared with many illustrations, her anger at me quite evaporated. After that I walked more warily where art was concerned, or rival critics. It never in all the years was necessary to be wary in anything that concerned poetry or the magazine.

Looking back at it now, I can see that Harriet's peculiar combination of trust in her own judgment, fighting spirit, thrift, and patience made *Poetry* possible and pulled it through many years of life and influence. This and her warm understanding heart. All the rival poetry magazines have come and gone, and it is safe to predict that most of those which have not yet gone will soon do so. But *Poetry* has remained, a stable refuge for beauty in a fluid mechanistic universe. A month before her death she told me that it had already been published

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for a longer period than any other publication devoted to the art of poetry in the history of English literature. That is a fine record, and the credit for it belongs exclusively and solely to Harriet Monroe.

She found time withal to do a considerable amount of travelling. She went several times to Peking, where her sister Lucy Calhoun lives, and she visited Egypt and Greece as well as the usual places in Europe. I remember that once, a year or two before she died, Hamlin Garland came to Chicago and spoke at a luncheon of the Midland Authors. He spoke in the resigned manner of some old people, saying that his life was over, that he was trying to grow old gracefully with his generation, living in the California sunlight and playing with his grandchildren. Somehow it displeased me. And it displeased Harriet too, for she spoke up suddenly and crisply, she who could not have been much younger than Garland.

"Not me!" said little Harriet. "I intend to go right on living till I drop. And what's more I intend to see every lovely far place there is left to see!"

Well, she did just that, and it is because of it that she is not alive today. When her aging body gave up the fight in the mountains of Peru because it could not keep up with the spirit within, a great spirit went on undimmed and undiminished into the portals of the future. For weeks after her death every South American mail brought a letter or a card from her telling how much she was enjoying herself and how vivid life was for her.

And Harriet, I am sure, would have wished it so. Her death was one of those singularly appropriate deaths, like that of Rupert Brooke, which seem to be designed by some great artist in human destiny, to round out perfectly the appointed period. And no grave could have satisfied her so much as a grave in the high mountains which she had always loved.

## I JOIN "POETRY: A MAGAZINE OF VERSE"

It is the fallible human custom to wish for the dead that they may rest in peace. But I can never wish that for Harriet. She would not have wanted peace, she who lived always in the forefront of battle because she loved it, and to whom peace would have seemed stagnancy. My wish for her is always that she may have found in the hereafter some new and more glorious cause for which to do battle—that she may not rest in peace, but struggle in glory.

Yet, for me, it seemed that when she died one of the props of the universe had been knocked out.

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## My Friends the Poets

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IT is not my intention, indeed it is not my place, to give here anything like a consecutive story of the magazine, nor of the history of the art which was made there. On the boat going to South America Harriet finished the last pages of her autobiography, and there she tells what she wanted told. Perhaps future generations may add by research something to this, since *Poetry's* records and books go to the University of Chicago, but that is not for me.

Instead I shall give here certain stories of the poets as I knew them in the old days when we were all younger, and living seemed to have a core of fire.

The first shall be Carl Sandburg. Carl was in those days a tall, somewhat gawky Scandinavian, always badly dressed, always fomenting in spirit. But there was in him a passion of sympathy for anything downtrodden or hurt and a vitality of the spirit which made everyone love him. He was working then on the *Day Book*, a small Socialist newspaper where his salary, if I remember right, was fifteen dollars a week. This was hard going for him and his quiet charming wife and his little girl, but such was Carl's loyalty to the cause that I believe he would have gone on working for it indefinitely if it

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had not folded up and ceased, thereby releasing to the world the undoubted genius which burned behind his blue eyes.

Floyd Dell had showed me some of his early poems, loosely woven bits of free verse, not up to his later standard, but interesting. None of them had yet been published. But I was not prepared for the sweep and vitality of the *Chicago Poems* which he brought into the office the first day I met him. They quite took us all off our feet and it was with much pride that we introduced this new star in the firmament. The poems created a great stir. There was no denying their impact, yet they roused a veritable storm of protest over what was then called their brutality. Many Chicagoans were furious at seeing the city presented in this, to them, unflattering light, and Harriet received many complaints. But we adopted Carl at once and loved him. He used to drop over often after work, and we would go out and eat pork chops—Carl always liked sustaining food—and have much fine ranging conversation on the universe in general and the injustice of man in particular. He had a deep sympathetic sense of humor which always kept him from being the usual thumping radical.

When the end of the magazine year came and the question of prizes was to be voted on, there was some uncertainty in the office. I, being then only the office girl, had no vote; but both Harriet and Alice Henderson inclined to give Carl the big prize of the year, the Helen Haire Levinson prize, which carried with it two hundred dollars. But even they were a trifle uncertain because of the storm of protest, as well as the novelty of the loose free verse. The deciding vote, I believe, was cast by Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor who was on the advisory board. He had stipulated that they do the first choosing and show him only the probabilities.

I remember so clearly the day he came to vote! Alice, who

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was perhaps in those days the strongest of all for Sandburg, cleverly gave him Carl's poems to read first. When he had read them Chatfield-Taylor said: "That is fine stuff. No question of it. But it is not poetry and we cannot give him the prize." He laid the copy down and went on to the other candidates, among whom was William Ellery Leonard with the beautiful end to his *Two Lives*, which we had printed as a separate poem. After he had read two or three more he picked up Sandburg again, only to sigh and lay the poems down. Finally, when he had quite finished, he returned once more to *Chicago Poems*. "They are the best of the lot," he said, "but are they poetry?"

"Well, what is poetry?" asked Alice. "Blest if I know!" said Chatfield-Taylor. Someone suggested that we look in the dictionary, and we got down the worn copy of *The Century Dictionary* and looked it up. There we found these words:

The art which has for its object the exciting of intellectual pleasure by means of vivid, imaginative, passionate, and inspiring language, usually though not necessarily arranged in the form of measured verse or numbers.

"So! If that is the definition I can vote for Sandburg with a clear conscience!" said Chatfield-Taylor. As he was one of the more conservative members of the organization his vote was sufficient to swing the prize for Carl. It was the only time I have ever known an academic definition to be of any practical value to a poet.

Fate gave to me, who had no real right to the pleasure, the opportunity of telling Carl that he had received it. It was Harriet's practice never to tell anyone outside the office, not even the prize-winning poet, until the copies were sent out and the news given to the press. On the afternoon when the copies were being mailed she and Alice had gone home and I

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was just locking the office for the day, a stack of wrapped magazines under my arm, when Carl came up the steps. I knew he would know the next day and the temptation to tell him was too great to be borne. I tore a wrapper off a copy and, standing in the street, I gave it to him, open at the significant page.

He read it very quietly, made some quite inadequate remark of surprise, and then said, "Come on and walk a ways with me."

I went and we turned northward towards the elevated railway, which I then took to return to Evanston. I was surprised at his calm way of hearing the news, for I knew it was his first big recognition, and I knew too that the two hundred dollars would mean much to him in itself. So I waited, following his lead, to see what he would do. He began at first to speak of some indifferent subject, and I followed. After what seemed to me a long time he broke off suddenly and spoke of the prize again, but only to sheer off almost at once on another tack. He repeated this several times, each time, however, speaking more directly of the prize. At last I saw that the shock of pleasure had been so great that he could not think of it at once, as one cannot put one's hand on a hot stove and leave it there. Only after the news had cooled a little in his heart could he settle down hard on it.

We had by this time walked long past my station but Carl would not let me go, and we walked on northward for miles. At last Carl stopped abruptly and looked me in the eyes. His own eyes, behind the thick lenses of his glasses, looked very big and blue and shining.

"How do you say 'twice quadruple'?" he asked unexpectedly.

"I'm not sure, but I imagine you would say 'octuple,'" I answered, wondering on what new tack his mind was running this time.

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"Then," said Carl, "that two hundred dollars will just ocuple our bank account!"

The sequel to the story came to us through Edgar Lee Masters. The two of them were at this time close friends, though later some filtering of literary jealousy came between them. A few days after the prize had been awarded, Masters came into the office and sat down heavily in our "poets' chair," an ancient affair of painted wicker, with a holder on one arm always untidily stuffed with papers. Most of the poets of our generation have sat in it and the thing really belongs in a museum. Masters dropped his arms outward so that they hung over the arms of the chair in a gesture of helpless confusion.

"What do you suppose that damn fool idealist Sandburg is going to do with the prize money?" he asked.

We protested that we did not know.

"He's going to have another baby!" said Masters.

Carl did it too, and the baby later became the official *Poetry* mascot.

Sandburg showed a continuing vitality and variety in his later work, including such different successes as the life of Lincoln and *The American Songbag*, which made him for a long time the outstanding member of the group as it was then. But in those days, though his *Chicago Poems* made a great stir, it did not equal in intensity the real explosion of interest which greeted Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River*. Indeed I do not remember any book of poems in my day which has had the *éclat* that this book of stark condensed portraits in free verse produced. The critics throughout the country were carried away by it in a wave that almost amounted to hysteria. They kotowed in rows, bumping their heads on the ground and grovelling. No words in the language were spared in praise. Masters was a second Shakespeare, a giant of almost legendary proportions. And this I believe was unfortunate for him later.



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For when the hysteria had passed the critics, as is the way of human beings, bethought them that they had been somewhat undignified in their protestations. They rose, dusted themselves off, and found it necessary in order to preserve their self-respect to assume a condescending attitude towards Masters' later work which was quite unjust. It is true that his next book, *The Great Valley*, was inferior to *Spoon River*; but when *Domesday Book*, with its magnificent sweep and inclusiveness and its deepened power, appeared it never received its just due. And his later books received scant attention, sometimes deservedly, sometimes not. I am glad to see that recently he has been having a real rebirth, with his biographies of Lindsay and Whitman and *Invisible Landscapes*.

Masters was not a young man when he wrote *Spoon River*, being then over forty. The story of his sudden finding of himself is one of the most amazing in the history of the poets and will bear repeating. He was a lawyer, had been at one time partner of Clarence Darrow. Also he wrote poetry and plays in verse. But they were privately printed and utterly negligible, all of them. He afterwards gave me copies of them, and I searched dazedly for any spark of the great fire that burned in him when I first met him. Quite without success. They were Shelley seven times removed, pale ruminations on stars and mountains and ships of fancy, or windy historical tragedies in pedestrian blank verse. Masters has always been a prodigious worker, pouring out stuff as steadily as Old Faithful Geyser pours out water. But he has been blest with little or no literary judgment. He seems not to recognize what is good and what downright bad among his productions.

The way of his release was this. I give it here because he told it to me while it was still burning in him. He was an old friend of William Marion Reedy, then publishing the *St. Louis Mirror*, and he kept trying to persuade Reedy to publish

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some of his poems. But Reedy, a man of fine literary perceptions, would have none of them. And he rallied Masters.

"Why," he asked him in substance, "do you keep on writing these foolish watery lyrics and these remote fulminations? You know life. You have seen more of it than anyone I know. Why don't you write about life as you know it? Why not write something with guts in it?"

And something answered in Masters one day, some burst of creative energy engendered by rage, which swept away his complexes, his ideas of what poetry should be like, as a flood sweeps away dykes. "You want life?" he answered. "Very well, you shall have life, and by God you shall have it raw!"

So he went home, "took off his coat" metaphorically speaking, and began *Spoon River*, not thinking of the sketches as poetry, thinking of them as a means of refuting Reedy. But this astute editor recognized them for what they were and published them at once. And he called steadily for more. By the time a score of them had been published those critics with an ear to the ground were already acclaiming them. In our own office Alice Henderson picked them up and showed them about. And she wrote in the magazine the first review of them. I followed suit with a review in the *Chicago Evening Post* while they were still appearing in the *Mirror*, and others throughout the country did likewise. Thus even before the book appeared the landslide had begun. By the time it had been on the market a week the slide had become an avalanche.

We soon found that Masters was a Chicago man and took steps to get acquainted. The first time I met him was on a train coming from the dunes of Indiana, that amazing country of rolling sand and steamy marshes, of plant life and bird life more varied than any other spot of equal area in the country. He had engineered a party to which I had been invited, though I had not yet met him. Several of my family went with

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me. But by some mishap we missed the party and it was only on the train coming home in the evening that we came up with them. Masters proved to be a heavy-set man with a roughly moulded face which in repose was more like that of Beethoven than any I have seen. Indeed I have somewhere a life-mask of his face which is so like the famous death-mask of Beethoven as to be startling. He had his two little daughters with him and he sat patiently, trying to talk, while the pretty little girls clambered over him, pulled his ears, and mussed his hair.

After that we saw much of him at the office. He would always in those days pull out a few more *Spoon River* sketches from his pocket and read them to us. And he used to look at me with a puzzled expression showing through his very justifiable pride, and ask: "But why are these so much better than my other things? What makes people praise these and pay no attention to the others?" I tried to explain, but even then I could see it was no use. He could not understand. After his first surprise had worn off and he no longer needed to "show Reedy," he began to take these poems much more seriously. He tried deliberately to pour a greater spiritual content into the form, and the upward trend towards the end of the book is very noticeable.

He and I grew to be great friends and were much together. His conversation had—and still has—the greatest range of any I know. He had read everything, history, literature, law, science, and he remembered it all. His thoughts were continually grappling with the major problems of man's existence, with the place of religion, with historical perspective, with social adjustments. At times it was like listening to a major prophet. I used to hold my breath in order not to disturb him. He suffered too very greatly from the only real case of world-sorrow I have ever met. The sight of the people in the street

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from his office window, with their pale unhappy faces and their petty preoccupations, used at times to hurt him so greatly that he could hardly bear it. It was an impersonal sorrow, but a very real one. As Sara Teasdale said to me once, "Edgar Lee can be forgiven much, for he suffers much."

He had too at this time a tremendous hunger to know all about people, all about everyone whom he met. I have seen him throw casual people into a real panic with his direct lawyer's questions. Where did they come from? What were their parents like? What education had they had? What religion did they believe in? Why were they alive? One had the feeling that he had gone through one's personality as one of those factory knives goes through a fruit, and had extracted all that mattered in a few moments. It was a disconcerting experience and many did not appreciate it! But Masters seemed to be quite unaware of the fact.

At times too his conversation would come suddenly down to earth. He often talked then of the *Spoon River* people as though they were real. A few of them were. He would break off some cosmic thought in the middle and begin to tell an earthy tale about old Bill Hopkins and a tailless cat—never troubling to tell me who old Bill might have been—or he would go into a huge Rabelaisian streak of pornography which was terribly startling at first. His vulgarity, in the best sense—meaning that closeness to earth and the things of the earth which is an undoubted part of every really inclusive genius—was as huge as the rest of him. I have a collection of Masters' pornography which could probably only be surpassed in the crypt of the museum at Weimar where Goethe's pornography is carefully preserved. He offended many people, among them his wife, by this streak in him, but it is an essential part of him.

When his fame was in full bloom his exhaustless energy—

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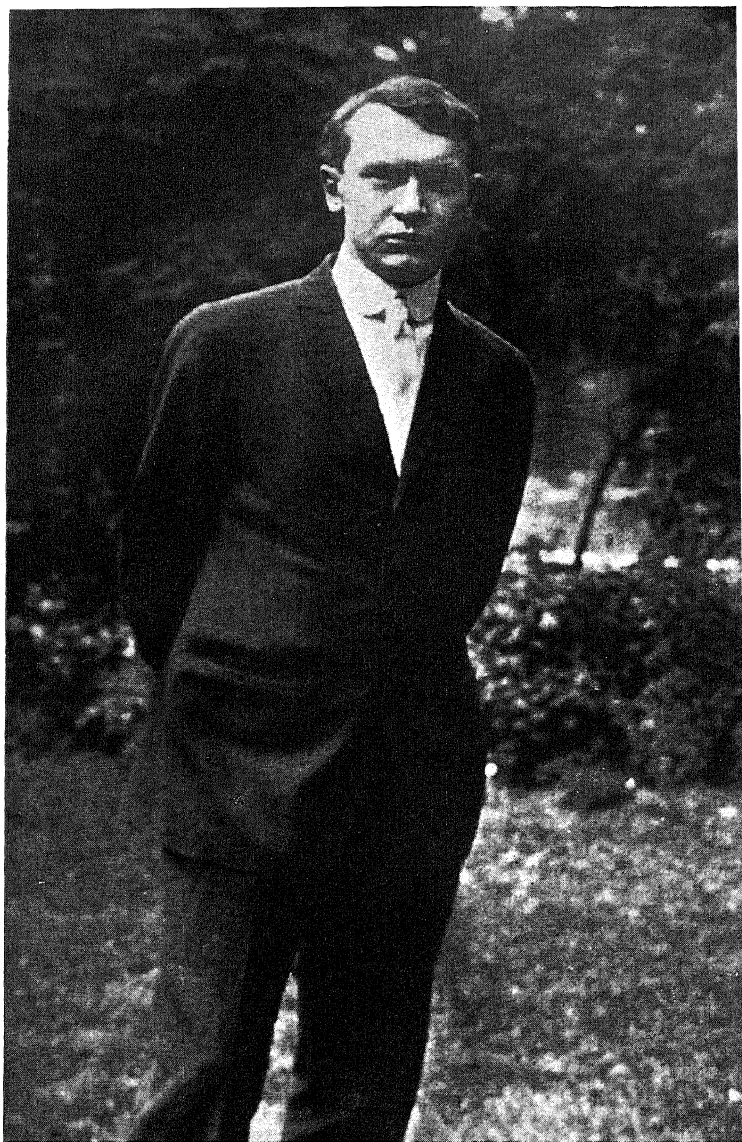
his mind was like a great engine that whirled night and day, never resting, never giving him any respite—caused him to invent several imaginary personages, among whom his favorite was Dr. Elmer Chubb, LL.D., Ph.D. Dr. Chubb used to send to the periodicals eloquent vituperations, in the best style of William Jennings Bryan whom Lee detested, against Masters and all that he stood for, bolstering them up with quotations from the Scriptures. And Masters would sometimes reply in his own person. It was a great lark, and Lee took infinite pleasure in it. He even had a handbill printed telling of a forthcoming debate, which of course could never take place, between Chubb and Masters on some forensic subject. Indeed he was rather fond of having things printed for his own amusement. I still have too a large placard with which he one day walked into the office, carrying it under his arm for me. He had been rereading *Don Quixote* and had come upon a sentence which seemed to him a fitting answer to all the bunk and welter of our civilization of which he was so acutely conscious. The card carries only this sentence: “ ‘All this is most important,’ said Don Quixote, ‘only it happens not to be so.’ ”

An afternoon or an evening with Masters was physically exhausting. There are persons whose mental vitality is such that ordinary people cannot follow them without strain. They seem to take the life from their listeners. Amy Lowell was such a person, but never so much so to me as Masters. I well remember that once, after I had married again and was large with child, Lee came to spend a day and a night with us where we were living in Lake Forest in Mary Aldis’ “Playhouse.” In the morning my husband went to work in the city, leaving Lee and me to talk the day through on the lawn, among the apple blossoms and the robins. I enjoyed it immensely, but I was so completely exhausted, not being in the best of health, that after he had gone I took to my bed for three days.

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Vachel Lindsay—in those days he signed himself Nicholas Vachel Lindsay—was another person of unbounded energy. He was not tall, but he had a face of roughhewn granite, with large features and prominent cheek-bones. His eyelashes were so light as to be almost invisible and his upper lip rather long and humorous. At times he would throw back his head till he seemed to be all cheek-bones, and boom out in his great voice some snatch of his poetry. His coming from Springfield where he lived was always an event.

We met him first when he offered us "General William Booth Enters into Heaven," which Harriet joyfully printed, and to which we gave the grand prize. Up to this time, although he had had a number of his poems and his curious fantastic drawings privately printed, and a poem or two had appeared unnoticed in smaller New York publications, he had found no regular outlet for his work; and he always gave *Poetry* credit for having introduced him. I knew of him before we met, and had received some of the privately printed pamphlets he used to send out broadcast from his loneliness in Springfield to anyone who would answer his letters. Among these pamphlets was a map of heaven on which were carefully marked the trees whose leaves were golden bells and a number of other things not mentioned in Revelations. Already at this time many people thought him insane, and his friends used to fear that some day he would cross the border line into the shadowy country where so many artists have gone. But for many years he did not. As he grew older a certain granite sanity inherited from a long line of pioneer Campbellite preachers came to his rescue and enabled him to survive the storms and stresses of his career. It was only at his tragic end that he went definitely over the border line. Poor Vachel, he also suffered! But it was not the world-sorrow which troubled him, but the fact that he was himself ill adapted to his day and civilization. He never quite



THE YOUNG VACHÈL LINDSAY, LOOKING, FOR SOME REASON,  
VERY STERN





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understood the world and always felt lost in it, like a child in a strange wood.

But the early days of *Poetry* were his flowering time, and he was always then a gay companion, full of quiet quips and robust entertainment. He would storm in from Springfield often enough, and when he came we always declared holiday. He brought us in pretty rapid succession most of his greatest poems, "The Chinese Nightingale," "The Santa Fe Trail," "Aladdin and the Jinn," and a number of others, and we printed them all. Sometimes he would recite them for us in his own inimitable fashion, holding his cheek-bones in the air and looking down his nose at us with such gigantic relish that we were quite carried away. When he began to develop his ideas of chanting poetry he would insist that we join him in the refrain. I can still see little Harriet Monroe, her cheeks quite pink with excitement, and big myself in a state of mingled awe and amusement representing King Solomon's four hundred wives and dutifully chanting, "We are the wives," while Vachel took our hands in turn and with a beautiful old-world courtesy led us through the mazes of a sort of dance he had devised for the purpose. At such times the office became a fairy world.

Once we all three went together to a picnic given by the Friends of American Landscape, a society which made periodical outings to the beauty-spots of the neighborhood. We went by train and afterwards by wagons to a distant wood where we picnicked. There were some fifty or more of us altogether. After lunch a sylvan program was held, beginning with a young man who danced among the trees clad only in a leopard skin. It should have been most effective, but the mosquitoes were very bad—the young man suffered more than any of us—and to make matters worse it began to rain softly. Then Vachel recited his "Santa Fe Trail," sitting under a bush. But

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the rain fell harder and harder till even Vachel's great voice could not cope with the sound of its pattering on the leaves. And finally we all broke and ran for cover.

Afterwards, when the rain had lessened, we went home. Most of us rode in the wagons, but Vachel, who was always energetic and this day was not too well satisfied, insisted on walking several miles to the train. By the time we reached Chicago he was a strange sight. He was dressed in white duck trousers which were splashed with mud nearly to his waist, and the red ribbon on his straw hat had spread its color down the brim and even overflowed on to his shirt. But he seemed quite unconscious of the fact.

We reached a station in the Loop at dusk. It was pouring now in earnest and the silent Sunday evening business streets were running in streams. A reporter from one of the papers met us at the station. He had not known, he said, what was occurring till too late to go with us, as certain other reporters had done. But would Vachel tell him what he had recited? Vachel would. "Just come along with me," he said, "and I will give you an idea of the poem." Whereupon he stepped jauntily out into the pouring rain, holding my umbrella in his hand and motioning the reporter to follow. There was nothing to do but to obey, the reporter on one side and I on the other, both of us fully exposed to the elements.

With no explanation of any sort Vachel skipped the beginning of the poem and began fortissimo:

"Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking.  
Listen to the quack-horns, slack and clacking!  
Way down the road, trilling like a toad,  
Here comes the *dice*-horn, here comes the *vice*-horn,  
Here comes the *snarl*-horn, *brawl*-horn, *lewd*-horn, . . ."

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This he recited as he always did in the most exaggerated manner, booming and thundering in a Gargantuan staccato till his voice echoed in the empty financial district and an occasional refugee in a doorway looked up startled. And as he talked he gesticulated with my umbrella so that the rain fell down on two sides, trickling in streams down my neck and that of the astonished reporter.

Then Vachel suddenly changed his mood entirely, turned his face beatifically upward into the top of the sopping umbrella and in his most dulcet and lyrical vein recited the stanzas which are inserted for contrast, lingering long on the final "sweet":

"Far away the Rachel-Jane  
Not defeated by the horns  
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—  
'Love and life,  
Eternal youth—  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Dew and glory,  
Love and truth,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet!' "

I watched the reporter. He was a tall young man with one of those round fat faces over which a great many superficial emotions chase themselves, like ripples in a pool. Now he was hopelessly bewildered. He thought Vachel was sheer lunatic—so much was plain. But he was also a little impressed in spite of everything. And he was very wet and very anxious to escape. All these things and many more chased themselves over his face in rapid succession. But Vachel was quite unconscious of it all, as he was unconscious of his streaked clothes. Instead he

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wrapped himself suddenly in a great dignity, told the reporter that he had now undoubtedly heard enough for his story, and dismissed him with a wave of the umbrella. The man gulped out something and ran for shelter.

Next day I looked for the report, but there was no word printed.

I have always been very grateful to Vachel for a great personal kindness he once did me. It was about this time that my divorce from Paul Tietjens was pending, and though the essence of the marriage was long past, a certain nervous strain remained. One day I happened to be alone in the office with Vachel when the phone rang. It was Paul, who had unexpectedly come from New York and wished to see me at once. I had not seen him for perhaps two years and had hoped the formalities could be completed without a further interview. But I consented to go downtown and meet him. When I turned from the phone I found that I was shaking with nervousness, my hands hopelessly unsteady. Vachel was not an observant person. Like many others he saw little of what went on under his eyes, being enwrapped in a world of his own; but when he really grasped a situation he could meet it beautifully. This day I was so shaken that I blurted out the whole story to him. He sat quietly, considering. Then he said, "How long will it take you to talk to him?"

"I will try to finish in an hour," I answered.

"Very well," said Vachel, "in an hour and a half I will meet you by the statue of Lincoln in Lincoln Park. Remember, you have an engagement with me which cannot be broken!" And he rose and went out.

I had not finished in an hour, but I was by that time completely exhausted. And I kept the appointment. Vachel was waiting for me with a quiet smile and a warm handclasp. He led me to the circular seat which surrounds Saint-Gaudens'

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great figure of the emancipator. It was very quiet there. The sun sifted gently down, and the sparrows chirped cockily, hopping over the flagstones. Vachel asked no questions, and I told him nothing. He just sat in friendly silence beside me for at least an hour, while the sun moved across the heavens and the torn fragments of myself gathered themselves together. When I said I was ready to go back to the interview he rose and put me on the street-car. Nor did he ever mention the matter again! Few indeed are the people in this imperfect world who can show so complete an understanding.

Later for a time there was a rift in our friendship. The cause of it was Sara Teasdale. Everyone who knows Vachel's history knows that he was deeply and beautifully in love with Sara at one time. He made no secret of the fact and dedicated many of his poems to her.

I came into the matter in this way. Somewhere through here I received a letter from Sara, who lived with her mother and father in St. Louis, asking me to come and visit her. I replied that I would like nothing better, but that I literally had not money enough for carfare. Sara's next letter contained a check for ten dollars—signed by *Harper's Magazine* if I remember rightly and made over to me—with the word that she had just sold a poem, and that she could think of no way she would rather spend it than on a visit from me. It would have been impossible to resist this even if I had wanted to, so I went to St. Louis for a memorable week.

Now Paul Tietjens came from St. Louis and I had often visited there, making many acquaintances. But on this occasion there was only one whom I wished to see, Ernst Filsinger, at that time in the shoe business, later to become the well-known international trade expert. I phoned Ernst, and the last day I was there I lunched with him. When I told him that I was visiting Sara Teasdale something extraordinary hap-

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pened to his face. It seemed to melt completely. I had never seen the real man in him before, but now it shone out like a light. Without answering directly he began to recite:

When I am dead and over me bright April  
Shakes out her rain-drenched hair . . .

and he continued through most of the poems Sara had then published. I was amazed and touched.

Then Ernst told me that he had loved Sara for years through her poems, but that he had never met her. She lived very quietly with her family and almost never went out in society. He had joined a literary group to which she belonged with the hope of meeting her; but she seldom came, and he had always missed her. Would I now introduce him?

It was too late to do so in person; but I felt that so much devotion should be rewarded, and I arranged the matter with Sara. He called the next evening and many evenings thereafter, and the friendship between them ripened fast. Ernst was tall and very distinguished-looking and bore even then the hall-marks of his later success. I could not blame Sara for her interest.

Then one day Sara, who was on her way to New York for a visit, came through Chicago and called at the office. Harriet and I were there. Sara, with her lovely grace, sat down on the floor between us and asked for our advice. Both Vachel Lindsay and Ernst Filsinger loved her, she said, though Ernst had not yet formally asked her to marry him. She was half in love with each of them, but she could not yet make up her mind which it should be. What did we advise?

Harriet spoke first and said that, though she did not know Filsinger, she thought that when one had a chance to marry a great poet like Vachel Lindsay one should accept it gratefully.

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I thought otherwise and said so. "But one does not marry the great poet! One marries the man, which is a very different thing!" I protested. Sara and Vachel were so divergent in their every angle on life that I was sure it would be bad for the work of both of them. Moreover Vachel was always penniless, and Sara, who was never well and who had been raised in luxury, needed the things which money could buy. Then too Vachel was a dynamo of energy and exhausted Sara. (Once when he had been courting her strenuously for a week she was obliged to take to her bed for three to recuperate.) Ernst on the other hand would always take care of her. She would be to him the moon and the stars. And besides, in spite of the Brownings, I thought that any two great poets were ill adapted for marriage. So I argued.

Sara arose, still undecided, and went to New York. A few weeks later I had a letter from her telling me that Vachel was there, courting her in his usual strenuous way. I could read between the lines that she was fast veering towards his side of the case.

So I wrote a letter to Ernst and told him what was happening and that if he was really interested in Sara it was time he acted. He proved to be a man quite capable of taking a tip. I had a telegram the day he received the letter asking me to be near the phone at six o'clock that evening. He wished to talk to me over long distance. When the time came, he did little but burble disconnectedly in dismay and confusion to the tune of, "She should never be allowed to do this! It will be bad for her, bad!"

But he acted at once. Sara told me afterwards that her room in the New York hotel was filled to overflowing for the next few weeks with letters, special delivery letters, telegrams and all the orchids and other flowers and candy to be had in the city. It stopped her from slipping into matrimony with Vachel,

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and presently she sent for Ernst. He came through Chicago riding a crest of hope, like a man beside himself. And it was not long thereafter that I had a telegram from them both saying, "Thanks to you we are the happiest people in the world!"

For many years I thought it an ideal marriage; but time did not bear me out. Life darkened for Sara during her latter years and something came between her and Ernst, so that she divorced him some time before her death. But Ernst—who is dead now too—worshipped her till his dying day. Two years after the divorce he sat with me, more distinguished-looking than ever, in a glittering New York restaurant, and spoke of her in the same awed adoring voice he had always used, while the tears dropped unheeded on his waistcoat. And he recited to me again her poetry, only now it was the beautiful later lyrics she had written to him. And I wept with him, for something lovely lost beyond recall.

But to return to Vachel and the old days. Sara must have told him about my part in her marriage with Ernst, for something went out of our friendship. Not that anything was ever said, but a certain coldness was in his voice always. Then one day out of a clear sky I had a letter almost of apology, saying that he had discovered that I had always been a true friend to him and that he wished the old ways to continue. I never discovered what lay behind the letter, but I was only too delighted. We were friends thereafter till his tragic death. Only a short time before he died we had a long session in Chicago, when I was trying to have *A Century of Progress* make records of his voice reciting his own poetry. Unhappily it never materialized; but I understand that Professor Greet of Barnard College recorded a number of Vachel's readings, of which three records, including "The Congo," are obtainable through the Columbia University Press. The rest should be duplicated also so that we may all have them, for perhaps never again



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shall we hear anything so inspiriting as Vachel Lindsay reciting his poems.

And Amy Lowell! We, like everyone else in the poetry world, have our Amy Lowell stories. She was dynamically interested in the magazine, gave us money for a prize, and alternately praised and scolded us in a stream of crisp letters. My own first contact with her came before I had met her in the flesh.

It was caused by the imp that gets into type-setting, back in the days when I was still doing office work. We were printing a poem in one of the halfway forms between poetry and prose in which she was then interested, an effusion about a young peasant woman whose lover had died a few days before the wedding, leaving her to bear an illegitimate child. Towards the end of the lament the girl said (I quote from memory, but I think it is exact, and I have printed it as it stood on our narrow page):

My mother  
will spit upon me and call me whore, and the priest will  
have me repent and spend the rest of my life in a convent.

It was a rather ticklish business at best in those days, and Harriet was doubtful of it both on poetic and on postal grounds; but Amy was so insistent that she finally agreed to publish it. In the proof, even in the page proof, the thing was set correctly, but somewhere between the page proofs and the final printing the line was dropped which read:

have me repent and spend the rest of my life in a con-

You can see for yourself what was left. There was no such meaning in our dictionary as Amy seemed to feel had been imposed upon her, "the incredibly vulgar," etc., etc., but a veritable storm of protest broke over our heads. The office door

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opened continually, it seemed to me, with letters, special delivery letters and telegrams from Amy. We did what we could, though the bulk of the magazine had already gone out. We recalled those in bookstores, we apologized in the next number, and for days I spent my time pasting little slips of paper with the missing line into the copies which remained to us. After that I was extremely curious to meet the redoubtable Amy. But it was long afterwards that I did so.

Then there was Arthur Davison Ficke, tall and handsome and *élancé*, as the French say. Arthur was a lawyer from Davenport and the only real "man of the world" among the group. When he came we had lunches and dinners at the choicest restaurants, ordered with a nicety of understanding of the graces of the table and of fine wines which was a delight. A certain true sensitiveness was perhaps his outstanding characteristic combined with a gallant irony which was his only protection. He was writing at that time beautiful subtle lyrics, and sonnets that have never been surpassed in my day. His mastery of technique was complete. Indeed I have never met a poet who seemed so conscious of just why he wrote things as he did. And he was a splendid critic. I learned more from Arthur's criticism of my poetry—he was endlessly patient—than I have ever learned from any other person. He would put his finger with an unerring instinct on anything slack or careless in my work and drive his point home with a fastidious irony that was devastating, but salutary. To him also I am grateful.

There was also Cloyd Head, who lived most inappropriately in Oak Park. He had a strange face and a shy manner at once humble and determined. An almost complete recluse by nature, he was possessed of a curiously subtle intellect that never failed to interest me. I had met him years before through Marguerite Wilkinson, and our acquaintance had ripened gradually into a somewhat remote friendship. It was fifteen years

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before I knew him well. At this time he appeared on *Poetry's* horizon through his very beautiful play in verse, *Grotesques*, which Maurice Browne had produced at the Chicago Little Theatre. Harriet Monroe was much struck with the play and departed from her usual procedure to give it an entire number of the magazine with illustrations, the first and only time we ran pictures in the publication. It won the Helen Haire Levinson prize one year.

Other members of the *Poetry* family were Henry B. Fuller the novelist, elderly and ladylike, whose elasticity of mind and gay wit endeared him to all of us; Agnes Lee (Mrs. Otto Freer), a gentle sensitive soul who wrote lovely restrained little narratives in verse, among which "Motherhood," which tells of a meeting between Mary the mother of Christ and the mother of Judas Iscariot, is the best known; Helen Hoyt, young then and somehow amorphous but appealing and very talented, whose short poem "Ellis Park," though not a great poem, has been more often reprinted than any poem the magazine ever published with the exception of Joyce Kilmer's "Trees"; Maxwell Bodenheim, a truculent young genius difficult to digest even then into any group of more normal people; Emanuel Carnevali, another flaming young talent, later associate editor of the magazine; Mark Turbyfill, a handsome youngster, later a ballet dancer, whose poems were sensitive and somewhat esoteric; Max Michelson, a furrier by trade, who spoke English with a strong accent; and one or two others. They were not, I believe, all there at the same time, but during the early years they were all with us.

Of distinguished visitors we had many, some of whom belonged with us in spirit. William Butler Yeats came several times, tall, beautiful, and awe-inspiring. He seemed never to be quite conscious of where he was or what he was doing, but dwelt in a far world of his own creation. The first time I met

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him Harriet Monroe took me up to introduce me immediately after he had given a lecture at Northwestern University. He was even more remote than usual, being in that blank spot which frequently comes to speakers at the end of the effort of speaking to a large audience. He stood receiving congratulations from a line of ladies without any expression whatever on his handsome face. The women would be introduced; Yeats would put out his hand to be shaken with a curiously automatic gesture, but would give no faintest sign otherwise that he knew they were present. They would murmur the usual amenities, say what they had to say to the inert statue that was Yeats, become embarrassed, repeat themselves, and finally run down and escape. He saw them go no more than he had seen them come. As I waited for my turn, I determined that I would awaken the sleeper. So I seized his hand firmly, put my face very close to his—we were just the same height—and said without preamble:

“Mr. Yeats, recite for me ‘Impetuous Heart’ from *Countess Cathleen*!”

After a moment a gleam appeared far back in his eyes as though he were returning from an infinite distance. He looked at me inquiringly. “Recite ‘Impetuous Heart’!” I repeated, still holding his hand firmly. Quite suddenly he came to life.

“I cannot, I cannot!” he said in a sort of wail. “The only woman who can do it is probably in Africa. You will never be able to hear it!” But from that moment he was present; and when I had to leave, he ran out bareheaded into the bitter cold of the Chicago winter evening and stood beside the car talking till I had to send him in to prevent him from catching pneumonia.

The next time I saw him he did not recognize me, which was no matter. Later he did know me and was always kind to

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me. He was the star of *Poetry's* first birthday party. But that story belongs to Harriet Monroe.

There was also Rabindranath Tagore; but since he came to Chicago during the very early months of the magazine, before I was connected with it, I did not meet him till later and shall speak of him in the proper place on the string. And there was Alfred Kreymborg, small, gentle, whimsical, with a quiet wit which was delicious. He used to recite his poetry in a way quite unlike Vachel's, but with as much personality as Vachel's way. I believe that one cannot quite get the quality of Kreymborg's poetry till one has heard him recite it. On the printed page something escapes. Years later I heard Krey's voice in a most unexpected manner, and it gave me the same quiet pleasure. It happened that we had been out of the country when radio first became widespread, and I had heard very few programs. When I returned I was in the amazing New York apartment of Burton Holmes, so filled with curios from the Far East as to resemble an oriental hashish dream. We were working then on a school reader of which Mr. Holmes supplied the pictures and I the text. In a pause of the consultation he went to the radio and turned it on. And suddenly out of the black box came Kreymborg's voice reciting "Lima Beans"! I recognized it at once as one would recognize a friend in a Lama temple in Tibet, and with the same surprise.

Another poet who blew through Chicago from time to time was Witter Bynner. He was rather like Arthur Ficke, indeed they used sometimes to be called "the Harvard Twins." "Hal," as his friends call him, is tall too and good-looking, with the merriest laugh in the country. He can make any party a success just by being there, and even now, when he must be over fifty, he seems the youngest person in any gathering. He had not then made his splendid translations from the Chinese,

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with Dr. Kiang Kang-hu, nor become so deeply attached to Santa Fe and old Mexico.

When he and Arthur Ficke perpetrated that most amazing literary hoax *Spectra*, they took in the partnership Marjorie Allen Seiffert of Davenport and before long they introduced her to us. Marjorie is an upstanding, square-shooting person, quite beautiful in her own way, and a very fine poet. She has been a great addition to the *Poetry* family for many years.

Rupert Brooke came to us too in those old days. He really looked like the young god he has been called. He had the fresh beauty that some young Englishmen have, and in addition he was deeply tanned by the sun of the South Seas from which he was returning. One would never have known to look at him that he then bore in his blood the coral poisoning which was the underlying cause of his dramatic death during the war. But even then he was thinking of England and of the coming conflict. Arthur Ficke, I remember, gave a party for Brooke and Maurice Browne, and afterwards Brooke and I walked down the avenue together. He spoke of the coming war and said he was going back because England would need him. I had not yet seen the war coming, and I thought him fanciful. But he knew better than I.

Robert Frost, though we published some of his *North of Boston* poems, did not, I believe, come West till later; but when he did come we found him charming too, with his quiet New England manner and his still more New England wife. It is always a joy to hear Frost speak. He sees so deep into the stuff of poetry and has opened so many eyes to the great value of the speech rhythms of common talk in poetry.

There were others too, but these should be enough to show why, to me, the little office of *Poetry* was in those days sacred ground, whose windows indeed were "magic casements."

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### *The Little Review*

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DURING those early years there were two other centers of artistic activity in Chicago which shared my interest, in a lesser degree, with *Poetry*.

One was the Chicago Little Theatre, Maurice Browne and his wife Ellen Van Volkenburg's fine challenge to the commercialism of the regular theatre. It occupied a tiny auditorium of ninety-eight seats in the old Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue, and it held its plume of courage and foresight high, though some of those conducting it were half starved physically. Time has proven its wisdom, for the little theatre movement which caught fire from Browne's torch has now spread over the whole country and has contributed greatly towards what is finest in the American theatre. But in those days it also suffered the fate of all beginnings, was laughed at by the regulars, condescendingly patronized from time to time by the society women, and finally left to die, an orphan on the doorstep of our commercial civilization.

But though I knew the Brownes after a fashion and attended some of the performances, especially the Greek tragedies, acquiring thereby new richness of the spirit, I had no personal connection with the group till later.

But *The Little Review*! Seldom in this all too practical world

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has there been an adventure like the early days of *The Little Review*. It was the perfect flower of adolescence, the triumph of wide-eyed and high-hearted ineptitude. It was a blaze of courage and a mine of foolishness. It was delicious.

I had the good luck to be in at the take-off. One day Margery Currey, whose parties are classic in the memory of all who knew them, announced that a big dinner was to be given at her studio to launch a new magazine. We attended eagerly, thirty or forty of us. People were there whom I did not know: a young round-faced man named De Witt Wing, who was pointed out as the financial backer; George Soule, later of the New York literary world; Alexander Kaun, a dreamy, lovable young Russian who now teaches in a western university; Llewellyn Jones, afterwards for years literary editor of the *Chicago Evening Post*, Ben Hecht, and others. But when after the dinner a young woman named Margaret Anderson got up to speak, we all knew that she was the burning core of the matter. And burn she did.

She was as beautiful as Rupert Brooke and as flaming as Inez Milholland. In her severe black suit and little black hat, under which her blond hair swept like a shining bird's wing, she stood pouring out such a flood of high-hearted enthusiasm that we were all swept after her into some dream of a magazine where Art with a capital A and Beauty with a still bigger B were to reign supreme, where "Life Itself" was to blossom into some fantastic shape of incredible warmth and vitality. Many of us knew that such a thing was impossible, but in those days the person who could resist Margaret Anderson was granite and cold steel. The most hard-boiled advertising managers gave her ads, and printers were wax in her hands. So we all went up in smoke together and promised our help.

Margaret took a little office, and the fun began. We held rosy meetings in little groups where the forthcoming master-



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piece assumed proportions which not the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Masses*, and the *Seven Arts*—our favorites then—could have touched if all their good points had been combined. I was rallied a good bit on my coldness. After all I was a few years older than many of them, and I knew something of what it takes to publish a magazine. But as I look back on it now, I know that I was only a degree or two cooler than they were.

At last the first number appeared. It had a severe outside, like Margaret's tailored suit, and the inside was the usual tentative array of ill-assorted things which might have been expected. But Margaret's editorial blazed with hope only less brightly than she did herself.

It was not, however, till I held this first number in my hand that I began to see the amazing person who was Margaret Anderson, the incredible mixture of adolescent dreams and vitality, of colossal blindness, and of a kind of savage scorn of everything she did not understand. The magazine, when it appeared, was the worst-printed screed I ever saw. When I taxed Margaret with it she told me with gay insouciance and a kind of irritation that she had made it up directly from the first printer's galleys—and he must have been a very bad printer at that. “It simply never occurred to me that one had to proof-read things that come from the printers!” she said.

Somehow the magazine continued. For a month or two De Witt Wing continued to pay the bills and the office rent; then he quarrelled with Margaret and fell out. After that it appeared through a monthly miracle. Person after person, caught in the blaze of Margaret's enthusiasm, came forward with money. Only recently I discovered that my brother-in-law Hi Simons—who later became the well-known conscientious objector and spent two years in Leavenworth prison where he led the folded-arm strike—reading the magazine somewhere in the North, had been inspired to send her money to bring out a number,

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money which he had painfully saved for quite another purpose. And I know that I pawned, and was never able to redeem, the diamond engagement ring which was all that then remained of my marriage to Paul Tietjens. How many more of us there were could probably be found by counting the issues.

The queer thing was that even as we did these things we knew how inept the result was, how brainlessly joyous and savage and scrambled each number appeared. There were a few good poems and articles, but they added up to nothing. Margaret could never think, never distinguish one thing from another. She could only feel in a glorious haze. And the emotion back of the adventure caught at us in spite of our minds.

Margaret herself was the adventure. She was so unbelievably beautiful, so vital, and so absurd! She was also terribly poor, always being put out of one place after another, at first with her furniture, afterwards without. Her wardrobe consisted literally of two garments, her black tailored suit with a white blouse which was always spotlessly clean because she washed it every night—she wore her clothes as a queen might wear them—and a lovely blue satin dressing gown. She had nothing else. The place where she happened to be living was always a jumble of people. Her sister Lois Peters presently came with her two small babies, sturdy little chaps, to live with Margaret, and a girl named Harriet Dean, and usually one or two others, sometimes amorphous young men, almost anybody who had no place to go or was fired by her enthusiasm. The food was casual beyond anything I had ever seen. Sometimes dinner would consist of bread and dill pickles, and sometimes, when a check had come from some mysterious source, breakfast would have ham, eggs, potatoes, hot cakes, and what not. The

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babies, I believe, were always reasonably fed, but mere food was beneath the serious consideration of the rest of them.

Once I remember spending the night at Margaret's with my own little daughter, Janet, then four or thereabouts. Margaret was then living in a large and imposing apartment overhanging the lake somewhere about Rogers Park. It had great rooms with imposing mirrors and high ceilings, but for furniture it contained nothing at all but a number of narrow iron cots, a kitchen table, and three or four chairs. The living room was quite innocent of everything except a few prints pinned on the walls and a cushion or two on the polished floor. But that troubled no one among us. We dined on pickles and frankfurters. When it came time for bed Janet and I were given a single narrow cot. Towards morning I fell asleep, only to be awakened at dawn to see Margaret standing over me.

Her blue satin dressing gown was like a shining skin upon her. The light of the rising sun shimmered on it and on her upraised arms, stretched high above her head, and her smooth gold hair. Aphrodite could hardly have been more lovely.

“Oh, Eunicel!” she cried, her voice vibrant with a clear joy of living. “It is a new day, and I am alive! Alive! Come out quickly and swim before the sun is really up!”

She was so like some antique goddess of dawn that I could only unlimber myself stiffly and follow her out into the cold water of the lake, where she splashed and swam happily and so gayly that presently a sleepy head was stuck out of a near-by window and a gruff voice bade us, “For God's sake, shut up!” That is the trouble with goddesses in a workaday world. They are seldom appreciated.

Presently that apartment too was lost, and after a while they were living thirty miles or so north of Chicago in Lake Bluff. Here things were even more chaotic than before. There seemed

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to be more people and less food. Finally, again dispossessed, they moved to a sort of summer-house on the beach belonging to Harry Bunting. He let them have it rent-free, I believe. It was bitter cold on the lake front in winter, but they survived somehow. When Christmas came Margaret had no money for a tree; but little things of this sort never disturbed her. She went forth with a hatchet, found a beautiful blue spruce, perfectly formed, and chopped it down. I believed her, knowing her, when she told me later that it "simply never occurred" to her that the tree was part of a carefully landscaped ravine belonging to Harry Bunting and had been put there at considerable expense. But Bunting felt—and I can understand that too—that she should be taught a lesson. So he had her arrested. I don't suppose the case reads in the records "Dawn Goddess versus Law and Order," but it should. Margaret was scolded, but let off. Bunting had accomplished all he wanted. But Margaret was unrepentant. "It is perfectly absurd!" was her final comment.

All this time the magazine continued to produce its monthly miracle. It became more and more radical, not in a social but in a literary way. Its presiding genius was by now thoroughly disgusted with Chicago and its lack of the proper Art and Beauty. One time indeed *The Little Review* appeared with completely blank pages, except for the statement that the editor had been unable to find anything which remotely resembled Art, and therefore she presented nothing.

It was Jane Heap perhaps who finally got together money for her and Margaret to go to California, to New York, and later to Paris. I have always respected and liked Jane Heap, though I never knew her well. She had initiative and an incisive mind. She appeared towards the end of the magazine's stay in Chicago, and little by little she became the guiding spirit of the publication. Margaret, who was always fond of music, re-

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tired more and more into her piano playing. Lois Peters married again. Finally Jane and Margaret left Chicago, and *The Little Review* came to us irregularly from afar, ultimately turning into the strangely colored butterfly of its later days.

But some irresistible glory left with Margaret.

The only other antique person I have met also lived in Chicago at that time—not a dawn goddess but a faun. His name was a chant in itself, Michael Carmichael Carr. He told me that once when he was a boy a new teacher asked him his name, and when he told it she said severely, "Once will be sufficient." Michael always wore a soft black hat with a wide brim and a great flowing black cape held together by a medieval silver Bible clasp. He had a red beard; he was so terrified of policemen—though he had never committed any crime—that he trembled when he passed one, and he was always peniless. But he had the most irresistible high spirits imaginable and a zest for life that made an adventure of everything, from cutting Mrs. Havelock Ellis' hair the first time he met her, in a hotel bathroom, to becoming involved with Greek moonshiners and fleeing dramatically through dark streets at night. Everything he touched was adventure and romance. To hear him tell his day's adventure was like a cordial. Indeed he is a sort of legend now to all who knew him then.

Later he went to New York and took to making theatrical properties. He was a wizard with his hands, as the life-sized golden puppet in Reinhardt's *The Miracle* as well as the other props could testify. When Norman Bel Geddes put on our *Arabesque* on Broadway he did some of the props for us.

But fauns have no consistent history. Michael died—mercifully, I think, since even antiquity had no place for aging fauns. But I am glad to have known him.

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### En Route for the Orient

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THE chronology of these things I have been telling may not be correct. I have woefully little time sense, nor, I confess, does chronology interest me. Events, once they are passed, exist for me *in vacuo*. Moreover these years were interrupted by an experience which altered my whole outlook on life, so that I was never afterwards quite the same person. This experience was a residence in the Orient.

My sister Louise Hammond was by this time a full-fledged missionary to China, under the Episcopal Board, stationed in a city of the interior named Wusih. Mother determined, with my sister Peg, Janet, and me, to visit her. I was loath to leave *Poetry*, but mother was adamant, and wisely so. And nobody could have lived on what I was making. We started at the end of 1914, after the outbreak of the war in Europe.

But first there was California, a dull winter in Pasadena, enlivened for me only by a fortnightly page of poetry criticism and gossip which I wrote for Sam Clover, a delightful person who lived in Arcadia and edited a little magazine called the *Los Angeles Graphic*. Enlivened also by a visit to Marguerite Wilkinson at San Diego, where her husband James Wilkinson was principal of a school. There too I met Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, the anthropologist, who was head of the exposition then in

progress; and this contact, slight though it was, set another note vibrating in me which has never stopped.

Lunching one day with Dr. Hewett, I asked him: "How does it happen that you have so interesting an art exhibit, with so many modern canvases? Though far smaller than the exhibit at the San Francisco exposition, it is much more vital. Yet you are a scientist and should not be expected to have so keen an insight into art."

"Young woman," he answered severely, "that is not an art exhibit. That is a part of my general exhibit of the history of man. First I show prehistoric man; then the four major races; then a true autochthonous culture, that of the American Indian; and lastly these twelve American painters, ranging from the most conservative to the most radical. But it is *not* an art exhibit! It is a cultural exhibit. Science, you know, judges the worth of a race by its culture, and art is the most significant form of it."

I, who had been raised among artists, found this an amazing way of pigeonholing what had for me existed by itself. I was struggling to understand the implications of it when Hewett leaned across the table impressively.

"And what does the exhibit prove?" he asked me.

"What does it?" I echoed weakly.

"It proves," said he, "that we have no art! Our culture is entirely derivative, coming from Europe. It is of no conceivable importance from a scientific point of view, except in certain mechanical phases."

I have sometimes told this story to my artist friends, but they either make nothing of it at all or are furiously angry with the idea that anyone could hold an art exhibit to prove that we have no art. But to me it came as a blinding flash of illumination, and when my surprise and delight had cooled a little I found that the universe had dropped back into a dif-

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ferent formation, a formation which it still holds for me. The artist, including myself, had found his proper niche.

This was also a fine introduction to a trip to the Orient. Afterwards, when I heard Americans speaking in that superior way of Japan because her culture had originally derived from China, I used to wish they could have heard Edgar Hewett on our own culture.

That summer I had a supreme experience. My sister Peg and I went for six weeks to the mountains of California with the Sierra Club. We had a permanent camp at Tuolumne Meadows, ten thousand feet above the sea, and from there we went on periodic trips farther and higher, sometimes climbing peaks, sometimes visiting remote little lakes whose blue hearts held peace unutterable. The air was cool and wine-clear. We bathed in sun and the crystal element of air. We were weary and footsore and tingling with life and happiness. Even to breathe was a delight. I felt consistently as though I had had two glasses of champagne.

Mountains are an integral part of my being. I had known the Alps, wrapped in majesty; wrapped also in a perpetual cloak of white vapor that swirls and moves like the veil before godhead. Rare indeed is the day when godhead reveals itself in snowy dazzling peaks of ecstasy! And I had known the Rockies, bare granite skeletons, hard and firm against the sky, majesty without mystery, beautiful as hard truth. But never had I known anything like the High Sierras. They too are hard and firm against an impalpable sky, and so close that one could surely put out a hand and touch a peak twenty miles away. Day after day during the summer months the sun burns clear upon them. But their snow peaks are frozen cries of ragged ecstasy that press upward in the heart. They are godhead revealed and yet mysterious, known and yet ungrasped. They are for me the ultimate incarnate beauty.



## EN ROUTE FOR THE ORIENT

It has always seemed strange to me that in the Occident the beauty of the mountains for their own sake should have waited so long for expression. Hardly anyone before Byron celebrated them so. Few seem to have climbed them for pleasure. Even the Greeks, who knew them well from below and who were so alive to beauty, spoke of them seldom if at all as places to which men might ascend, but always as thrones from which the gods came down. In the East it is not so. Early India and China knew them well for what they are.

After the Sierras we went to Carmel, and here I was shamed by a horse. It came about because mother and I had rented two beasts to ride to Point Lobos. Now I have never been a horsewoman, in spite of the proper "equestrian" lessons as a girl. I am afraid of the beasts, and they know it. This one, however, was a gentle enough creature and did not take advantage of me till we came at the end of the way to a watering trough, a long wooden affair. But here he determined to show me just what he thought of me. Instead of drinking as he should have done, he rose abruptly on his hind legs and put his forefeet in the trough itself. Nothing would move him to come down again, and there I clung in mingled terror and shame while he calmly enjoyed mother's shrieks of laughter, in which she was joined by several passers-by. When he had had quite enough, he got down again, but through no efforts of mine, and carried me quietly home!

Several times I have seen animals express their scorn of human beings. Camels do so often. Once I saw a llama in a zoo calmly spit a mouthful of chewed cabbage into the face of a young man to whom he had taken a dislike. But the most devastating scorn I ever saw expressed was by a small quick-trotting rhinoceros in a New York zoo. He was in an outdoor enclosure, shut in by high wire fences which formed a corner at one place. Just outside this corner stood three people, a man

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and two women, who for some reason were laughing and making fun of the rhinoceros. He looked at them for a moment, his little eyes full of rage. Then quick as a flash he ran to the corner, slewed himself around so that his rear was directly in it, let forth a stream of almost liquid excrement, and as he did so fanned so vigorously with his tail that the stream was shot over the clothes of the mocking trio, whose laughter instantly turned to shrieks of dismay. Then the beast faced them and grinned. It was absolutely impossible to mistake his intent.

After Carmel we went to San Francisco where we had an apartment overlooking the Presidio. One evening far below us we saw that a house was afire, a sullen scarlet flame against the darkness. Around it tiny black figures danced a strange Morris dance of terror and impotence. Next day we were told that the wife and children of an army officer named Pershing had perished in the flames.

In San Francisco I met Jiro Harada, 'art expert to the Emperor of Japan, a devout Buddhist of the Zen sect. He spoke English more beautifully than I; he lived in the world fully yet was not of it; his hands held the poised peace of the oriental mystic. As a commissioner to the Panama-Pacific Exposition, then in full swing, it was part of his duty to explain his country to visitors, but to me he did more. He opened a gate which has never closed, the gateway to the East.

There also I came to know two other friends who are knit to me for better or worse, Lemuel and Mary Field Parton. Lem is a newspaper man, at that time working for the *San Francisco Bulletin*. Mary is the very salt of the earth, witty beyond anyone I have ever known and warm-hearted as Mother Earth herself. She was then the only woman honorary member of the structural steel-workers' union. Their house on Russian Hill was the rendezvous of all sorts of fascinating people, leaders of the labor movement, artists of all kinds, newspaper

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people, and delightful disreputable characters who belonged in no category but were epic tales in their very presence. A visit there was always an event.

Presently Harriet Monroe came to visit the exposition, and through her I met California's three foremost poets of the time: Edwin Markham, George Sterling, and Ina Coolbrith. Ina Coolbrith was an elderly woman, very lovely in a carved ivory fashion, whose darkened rooms were a sedate sanctuary. Some organization (I think it must have been the women's clubs) had persuaded the state to name her officially "The Loved, Laurel-Crowned Queen of California Poetry"! How she surmounted the ineptitude, I don't know; but she did. George Sterling was still beautiful and lithe and Byronic, though already his graces sat a trifle wearily on him. I might have sensed the coming tragedy, but I did not. Perhaps I was deceived by his pose of strenuosity. His letters, and his talks, usually ended with, "Now I must go and chop down a tree," or, "Now I will swim far out into the Pacific and feel the earth turn under me." He was a delightful companion, gay and moody and full of caprices. Once when I had accidentally dropped my handkerchief, he pounced upon it as a small boy might have pounced on a dime, held it to his nose and sniffed at it. Then he handed it back with a rueful smile and said: "In the romances a lady's handkerchief is always redolent of a subtle and heart-stirring perfume. But I cannot find it so in life. I always smell them, and they always smell of laundry soap. Something has gone out of the world!"

It was Sterling who took Harriet and me to see Edwin Markham. Even then Markham was elderly, with the white hair and beard which became so well. He was gentle and cosmic, reminding one inevitably of Whitman. I loved him on sight, as did everybody else. But even Markham had his human moments. He and Sterling put on a little drama for the dis-

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tinguished Chicago editor, Harriet Monroe, which amused me to the tips of my toes. They did not spring it till after the visit, when we were already on the sidewalk and about to step into a taxi and depart. Markham had accompanied us to the sidewalk, and now he said in an exaggeratedly offhand manner to Sterling:

"George, old fellow, will you do something for me? They have asked me to write the official ode for the exposition, but I don't feel like doing it. Will you take it off my hands?"

Now this official ode was the greatest poetry plum in that part of the world. It meant honor and added fame and a thousand cold dollars. It was a thing to be hoped for and schemed for—supposing one cared for official poetry or needed the money. And thus did Markham toss it off before us!

And Sterling, not to be outdone, reflected a few seconds gracefully in the sun, his dark hair tossed off his forehead, and said:

"Thanks, Markham, I don't care if I do. Yes. If you don't want to be bothered, I'll do it for you."

Then he bowed us into the taxi and stepped in after us. It was really superb.

In San Francisco also I met two other poets, Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Sara Bard Field. Neither of them was then so well known as now. Indeed I think Sara, who is Mary Par-ton's sister, had written little or nothing at that time. Wood had already privately printed *The Poet in the Desert*, that stirring epic of man's spiritual adventures. But he was not as yet a national figure. At this time he lived in Portland and had come down for a visit. He also had white hair and a white beard and stood wrapped in the majesty of human warmth.

He too was a man of the world. He gave a small luncheon for us at one of the more *recherche* restaurants for which San Francisco is noted. When he appeared the head waiter in-

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stantly abandoned all mere mortal diners and confined himself exclusively to our table. The luncheon was a triumph of delicate ordering, the balance perfect, the wines above reproach. It contained among other things chicken à la *Jérusalem* and *figues glacées*, ripe figs served in a smooth bomb of shaved ice from which one had to excavate them. When the chicken appeared, the head waiter took it from the attendant, sniffed at it, frowned, and raised his shoulders. "Zis ees not goud enough for Monsieur Wood!" he said, and with a disdainful wave of the hand, "*Rapportez-le à la cuisine!*" So it was taken away for further perfection. When it was finally submitted to Mr. Wood and he graciously accepted it, one felt that not the most fastidious of the Roman emperors could have been better served. Three separate items were treated in the same manner. The luncheon dragged, but the gesture was perfection itself.

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## 6

# Japan and the Emperor's "Coronation"

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THAT autumn we sailed from San Francisco for Japan. The "coronation," as the Occident called it, of the Emperor Yoshihito was about to occur, and we had set our hearts on seeing what we might of the festivities.

The trip over on a Japanese liner was in itself a halfway house to the Orient, enlivened by a startling incident. The Emperor's birthday occurred while we were in mid-Pacific, and a passenger in third class attempted to commit the ceremonial hara-kiri by making two slits in his abdomen, one horizontal and one vertical, and then reaching in and pulling out his own entrails, "in honor of the auspicious occasion." But he was prevented from finishing the gesture, modern Japan having certain second thoughts on these matters. As the captain explained to me, "Many things come outside, but the doctor fix him up."

Arrived in Yokohama, I entrained at once for Kyoto, in the last available berth, a second-class upper from which at least two feet of my somewhat exaggerated length protruded. The ceremonies were to begin there the next day, and I was to write an article for *Vogue* concerning them. The rest of the family went to Tokyo.

The next morning at dawn I stepped from my own century

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into the past. It was one of those misty mornings for which Japan is noted. As I rode in my first rickshaw behind the trotting man, the city unrolled before me wrapped in layer on layer of mist, each growing greyer in the distance. And each layer seemed distinct from the others, not merged in one universal smudge as other fogs had been. From this mist appeared all the figures with which I was familiar in the prints, the pedestrians on their high wooden geta, the coolies with loads on bamboo poles balanced across their shoulders, the rickshaw runners with their wide hats and the rosy black-haired children like the Japanese dolls I used to have at home, dressed in bright red or blue with huge patterns on their kimonos. And all these were on a diminishing scale owing to the mist, each almost like a cut-out figure against the grey. Those nearest were large and bright-colored, those farther away smaller and duller, and at last nothing but the mist. It was like riding wide-awake into a dream, into a Hiroshige print. It was magical, and it was unbelievable. Strange beauty and extreme happiness always strike me the same way, as though there were a mistake somewhere, a slip in the cosmic wheels, and I were experiencing something not permitted to mortal senses.

I knew then infallibly that the Japanese prints are not the astonishingly imaginative and conventionalized affairs I had always thought them to be, but an almost literal transcription of what the painters saw before them. All the landscapes of Japan are like no other landscapes on earth. They are embodied prints. Even the horses look like Hokusai drawings and not at all like our own familiar equines.

Because of strings pulled by my missionary sister from China, I was enabled to lodge in Kyoto with a delightful elderly missionary named Miss Southern, whose house on Karasumaru Dori faced the Emperor's palace, the Gosho. In spite of many years in the field, certain entirely harmless but quite

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human curiosities remained with her, and she watched with almost as much excitement as I the endless string of important Japanese gentlemen who were always coming and going to the great gate opposite. They were usually dressed in amazingly resplendent western uniforms embroidered in solid gold from the waist to the neck, and topped by great cocked hats with long waving plumes which sat oddly on the bronze faces. They came in rickshaws, each sitting high and solitary, and they looked like nothing so much as large shining dolls being trundled along.

The "coronation"—though Japan has no crown—was the first to occur in the Land of the Rising Sun since it had emerged into the full light of the West, and the country was set upon showing the world a thing or two. Therefore they revived for the occasion, for the first time in three hundred years, the ancient medieval ceremonies which had been discarded with the real power of the Emperors during the Shogunate. The unfortunate young Emperor, in frail health, was put through such a course of sprouts that he must have been hopelessly disgusted with the throne, if one may speak thus humanly of the Son of Heaven.

For three weeks he was paraded about, put through innumerable minor ceremonies, invested with the almost magic sword and mirror which made him the head of the Shinto religion, and left to commune with the spirits of his ancestors.

His first appearance in Kyoto, whence he had come by train from Tokyo, was to my western mind the high spot of the whole affair. It was so simple, so Japanese, and so oddly moving. The entire length of the way from the railway station to the palace had been not only decorated but deeply sanded. Beside the way the population was massed in solid ranks, the old people, held in great respect in Japan, being given separate stations where they sat on clean mats. The foreigners were





JAPANESE DIGNITARIES AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF THE EMPEROR AT THE RAILWAY STATION IN KYOTO

The women wear the medieval ceremonial costume revived for the occasion.



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placed together in the palace gardens under the eye of an official. The procession of carriages carrying the Princes of the Blood and the great gilded coach of state were such as I had seen in many a western country.

What moved me was the silence. For from the moment the Emperor entered the carriage not a sound of any sort, not a breath, was heard in the entire city. Silence settled down, palpable as a dream. Only from the palace gate a single silver horn wound in a minor drooping cadence that haunts me yet. The thin thread of its melody seemed only to make the silence audible.

When the procession came in view between the solid ranks of Japanese who were all as immovable as statues, holding their breath lest they waken from the dream, the feet of the black horses made no sound in the sand; no harness jingled, no wheel crunched. It passed, the straight young figure in the vast coach as quiet as a marble image, passed as a shadow might pass over water, touching nothing but the heart. Only the silver horn far away drooped its minor cadence.

To the credit of the unaccountable westerners, to whom I belonged, be it said that under the eye of the terrified official who alternately commanded and pleaded with us beforehand not to shout a jarring "Hurrah!" they also were silent. In no country except Japan could the mere passing of an imperial procession become so deep an emotional experience.

From the standpoint of the Emperor the nadir of the event must have been a ceremony which occurred at night near the end of the three weeks. In the gardens of the palace two small ceremonial houses with thatched roofs were built. To one of these he was led on a bitter-cold November night, treading on a carpet which was unrolled before him and rolled up behind. Here he was given a ceremonial bath—the house was unheated and he was in poor health—and six cups of saké,

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three white and three black, to drink. After this he was left to commune on his knees for three hours with the spirits of his ancestors. (The saké, which I later sampled, was ceremonially prepared, the rice being planted by virgins and tended by pure young men, and it was vile stuff, not like the usual beerlike drink, but thick and bitter.) At the end of these three hours, the carpet was again unrolled and the unfortunate Emperor guided to the other house, where the whole ceremony was repeated, even the bath! It was dawn before he was permitted to depart.

All this while a chosen few of the great and a number of politicians, all Japanese and all men, had been allowed the great honor of "assisting" at the ceremony. They sat in a grandstand all night facing a blank fence, over whose top they could see the tip of the thatched roof of one of the ceremonial houses. A friend of mine who was there described to me their difficulties. It was not so bad at first, and at one o'clock they were all conducted indoors and given a bounteous collation. But the latter part of the night was sheer torment. It was "three coats cold," and their ceremonial costumes were insufficiently warm. They were also obliged to sit bolt upright, in absolute silence, and the punishment which would have been meted out to anyone who dared to be seen nodding would have been far from pleasant. When they filed past my window at dawn they were all blue with frost and fatigue. One elderly statesman contracted pneumonia and paid for the honor with his life, and almost all the rest had horrible colds.

I believe that after the ceremonies were over the Emperor handed down a Rescript from the Throne specifying that never again should these ancient ceremonies be carried through to the bitter end, so that no future Emperor, nor his subjects, need be so tormented as he was.

For myself, I was not allowed to attend the final and most

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formal ceremony, though I saw a number of the minor ones. To this last only the foreign ambassadors, attachés, and their wives were permitted to go. But I was somewhat consoled by the fact that they too shared in the general discomfort. Though the ceremony occurred in the afternoon, Japanese formality demanded that the women come in full court *décolleté*, not even a scarf being allowed to the oldest. They sat for hours on an equally cold day in open galleries while ceremonial dances and salutations were held, the ancient Premier Count Okuma read a speech to the throne, and the Emperor replied. When I saw them afterwards they also were blue with cold.

But though I was denied this somewhat two-edged honor, I attended something far more interesting to me who have passed my life among artists. This was a special command performance by the most distinguished troupe of *Noh* dancers in the world. It was given twice, the first time for the Emperor and the Princes of the Blood, and the second time for the members of parliament, the diplomats, and the foreign press. An experience of this kind comes seldom in a lifetime.

The second performance was given in the afternoon in the *Noh* theatre attached to one of the palaces. As in all such theatres the stage, with its three pine trees painted on the back wall, is separated from the audience by a narrow space left unroofed, so that the sunlight, or the rain, may come between it and the audience, and aid in the magical effect of psychic distance. A runway on the stage level goes from one side of the stage to the dressing room, and along this runway the actors make their entrances.

At this performance the costumes were so beautiful in the rich subtleties of their colors and the texture of their rare silks, and so strange in their lines, at once stiff yet fluid, that they smote my heart with an almost physical blow. The acting was as highly conventionalized as the drama itself. The ges-

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tures were absolutely set, and more like slow dance movements than anything we have in the West. All the important characters wore masks, and all were played by men. The whole effect, to my untrained western ears and eyes, was at once unutterably strange, exotic, and melancholy—and of a profound and moving beauty.

One thing struck me forcibly at this performance. Between two of these remote short dramas—for they are remote even to the Japanese—was inserted a comic interlude in which a man in contemporary or near-contemporary dress, unmasked, was uproariously drunk with appropriate gestures, to the vast amusement of the audience. The old-school Japanese have often been considered by westerners as dwelling in a small world of precious beauty, unrelieved by humanity. Yet here, at the Emperor's own performance, was sure proof that the *Noh*, like the *Commedia dell' Arte* of Italy, has a real perception of the necessity of vulgarity to the strange being that is man. Perhaps it is only that in Japan the difference between the inside and the outside of life, the spiritual and the physical, is more sharply drawn than with us.

I had, while in "Greater Nippon," two other theatrical experiences which left their mark. The first was the Bunraku, the puppet theatre of Osaka. These puppets have made their home for over four hundred years in a temple garden of this now westernized and commercialized city. Their performances are like no others anywhere.

When the moment has come, and before the curtain goes up, a portion of the wall beside the proscenium swings suddenly round, revealing on a small platform two men, one the musician with the samisen and one the narrator. This narrator does all the talking, sometimes giving verbatim what the puppets are saying, sometimes telling the story in his own words. He does it in a way both conventionalized and highly

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dramatized, his voice rising and falling in exaggerated cadences, his face often contorted with passion. He weeps and laughs more as a giant than as a puppet might weep or laugh, yet there is strangely no clash of overtones. It is as though the puppets floated on the stream of his narrative, bodying it forth, supported and gaining vitality by its very vividness.

The puppets themselves are large, though smaller than most Italian puppets. They are brilliantly colored, dressed in priceless silks and satins. On each man-puppet's face some particular features are movable, sometimes the jaw, the eyebrows or the eyes themselves. The women-puppets' faces, on the other hand, are smooth and immovable. Their realism is absolute, within the always somewhat conventionalized frame of the Orient, and their ability to perform physical feats astonishing. In one scene which I saw, a puppet warrior, a captive and wounded, wished to leave a written message. His hands were tied behind his back but, nothing daunted, he plucked with his teeth the spearhead sticking in his shoulder and, using this and his blood, he wrote on a suspended screen. The gestures of the head as it turned again and again to the wounded shoulder for more blood, and as it made the motions of writing, were extraordinary. In another scene a woman, returning as a prodigal to her home after long years, sat outside the house in a most realistic snowstorm of falling paper, singing plaintively and playing the samisen. The instrument was played as a person would play it, the fingers of the left hand, each separately controlled, rising and falling on the strings. It was uncanny.

But to me the most extraordinary thing about these puppets is the manner of their manipulation. It shows more completely than anything I have seen that all art rests at bottom on convention, of which our western "realism" is only one form. For the operators—two or more to each puppet—are at

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all times in full view of the audience. These dolls are not marionettes worked with strings, but true puppets controlled by the arms and hands of the operators from the back of the figure itself. The stage is built in several levels, each level having a sort of raised counter running parallel with the proscenium arch. Behind the counter stand the operators, and on its surface the puppets perform. The counters are draped in black and each operator wears over his whole face and figure a black gown which completely conceals him, turning him, if I may describe it so, into a featureless black fountain. The slits through which he sees are indistinguishable.

Thus each brilliant and shining puppet is accompanied in its every movement by these large black shadows. But so willing is the spectator to accept any given premise that after the first moment of surprise the operators are so completely forgotten as to be actually invisible. If only some of our western theatrical people might learn a lesson from these puppets!

My third theatrical experience was of another kind, being a performance of the romantic western opera *Boccaccio* given by the Imperial Opera Company of Tokyo. Here the performers sang and disported themselves in the manner of the West, to our vast amusement. The women especially baffled me. They were dressed in long medieval Italian gowns and wore great fluffy yellow wigs with long braids which made their heads grotesquely too large for their bodies, and from which the small bronze Japanese faces peeped with ludicrous effect. And their movements! Until one has had it pointed up, one can scarcely grasp how completely racial every gesture of our bodies must necessarily be. The most common gestures of rising, sitting, walking, and moving the hands are totally different in the East and the West, and only by a great interpretive genius can this difference be overcome. I have laughed just as heartily at western actors pretending to be orientals,



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but only this one time have I seen it the other way about. A little Japanese man in blue silk tights walking with an exaggerated stride as a *quattrocento* Italian, and trying against every instinct of his being to make love acceptably in public, is something to be seen! Only one girl who had lived for some years in San Francisco had grasped something of the way we move and made a reasonably good soubrette. With the music they did far better, having been carefully trained by foreign teachers. Perhaps there they had less to overcome.

Japan has changed very greatly since I was there, nearly twenty years ago, and the pattern must now be much more unified than it was then. Yet I imagine that even today the struggle for readjustment between East and West must be curious to watch.

In Kyoto at that time I saw much of both old and new Japan.

One afternoon Miss Southern and I climbed up to a favorite spot in the hills surrounding the town for the "maple viewing." It was a gorgeous day, clear and crisp, with a sky of clear blue faintly frosted with white. We came out at last on a little level space on the top of a hill. Immediately below us was a deep valley or ravine filled to overflowing with maples. They were not the variety known here as "Japanese maples," whose leaves are always a deep red, but a feathery sort more like our own, light green in summer and now turned a vivid scarlet. They rested on the hillside lightly and ethereally as a scarlet mist. Far below us in the valley we could see in glimpses the winding silver line of the stream which wandered through the valley. And we bought quantities of little pottery dishes—the proper thing to do under the circumstances—and tried sailing them out over the maples to see if we could drop them into the water.

Suddenly, from a small building near by, a number of little

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girls from ten to fifteen years old, I should judge, trooped laughing out. They were dressed in bright kimonos, brilliant as the maples and with the large vivid patterns which children wear. With them was a young man with a prurient face. The girls surrounded us with gales of childish laughter, fingering our foreign clothes and making friends as children will. I was delighted and only wished that my Japanese were adequate to the occasion. But I did what I could, bought them little cakes and handfuls of plates to fling. So we got on famously, and presently we all started down the homeward way together.

It was very beautiful and very quiet on the woodland path, but we stormed down it as noisily as toucans. Still thrown back on action, I seized a big drum which the young man carried, hung it over my neck and beat upon it. The little girls screamed with delight, though I noticed that Miss Southern, who up to now had said nothing, hung back with an odd look on her face.

Then we came to the bottom. The young man stepped quickly forward, took the drum, and gave what sounded like an order to the girls. At once they seemed to change character. Although up to now they had been laughing with me, with the clear laughter of childhood, now they seemed to laugh at me almost pruriently, and the young man's face wore an unmistakable sneer. Quickly they formed in ranks and walked away.

Puzzled, I turned to Miss Southern. "Who are those children?" I asked.

"Girls in training in a geisha house," she answered, "out for a holiday. They saw you did not recognize them, and it amused them."

"But they are such babies!" I cried.

"Yes," said Miss Southern, "even so!" And she sighed.

Well—I am glad I did not know it sooner. The life of the

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geisha, though they are "accomplished persons" and no common prostitutes, is far from happy. And if I had known I could not have met them so simply nor enjoyed so keenly their childish laughter floating among the feathery maples.

In Kyoto too I met that most modern manifestation of the country, the newspapermen. There were hundreds of them gathered there for the great event, all small compared to my own height, so that I moved with them like a steamer accompanied by tugs. They were even more completely organized than our western press, every move prescribed to an incredible degree. They swarmed upon all incoming foreigners of any distinction, demanding to know what they thought of things the questionee had not yet seen. They rushed about, wearing gold arm-bands and buttons and carrying many credentials, and they gave out only such news as was permitted. But they were most kind and helpful to me.

The Osaka *Asahi*, or *Morning Sun*—Osaka is only a short distance from Kyoto—seemed to be the most energetic of the newspapers, and it was through this paper that I had my first formal Japanese dinner. They sent out a general invitation to all visiting foreign press correspondents to dine with the editors; but most of them had already left town, and only two of us showed up, a Frenchman representing a Paris paper and myself. I believe the Frenchman's name was Lepelletier. The Japanese were three, two editors and a girl reporter—the first woman in Japan, I believe, to hold such a position. They spoke a little English, but with difficulty, and M. Lepelletier spoke about as much of my own tongue as they did. So what conversation there was went on in English. But there was very little. For the most part we sat upon our heels in silence while a long array of strange dishes passed before us. Now the silence of the Orient is startling at first to westerners. We are afraid of it. And the Frenchman was as new to the East as I. Courtesy

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seemed to demand that we show great interest in the dishes, which we did, but these punctuations only made the silence more dynamic. From time to time M. Lepelletier and I could endure it no longer and would turn to each other and jabber furiously in French, only to relapse somewhat shamefacedly into the prevailing silence. We both felt that the affair had gone somewhat badly. Therefore we started visibly when the managing editor, rising at last, began to put on his coat and suddenly remarked:

"I am very sorry that you have had such a miserable time at our unworthy dinner."

M. Lepelletier and I looked at one another aghast and broke out into voluble denials. But suddenly I caught myself. There had been something casual and habitual about the remark which gave me the clue.

"Is that a politeness remark?" I asked. "Forgive me, but I do not yet know your ways, having been in Japan only a few weeks."

"Certainly," answered the editor; and he added with a touch of scorn, "I suppose in your country the host would say, 'I am delighted that you have enjoyed yourself so much at our glorious feast!'"

We tried to explain to him that at home either remark would be equally inept, but I am not sure that we succeeded in convincing him.

Another curious incident occurred in Kyoto. I had already made the acquaintance, by the time the weeks of ceremony were over, of a wealthy Japanese in a rather prominent political position, a self-made merchant of the new commercial type, who spoke English well. One afternoon he came to tea with Miss Southern and me, and under the influence of foreign cakes and tea and an atmosphere less restrained than is usual in Japan, he began to talk in human terms of the Emperors, a

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thing strictly forbidden by etiquette. I was delighted, since from all I had been able to gather until that moment they were nothing short of demigods. He talked at first of the old Emperor—the Meiji Emperor, as he was called. He did it curiously.

"The Meiji Emperor was a great man," he began solemnly, "a very great man." I nodded. This was the usual thing. "He was very silent," went on my friend. "He never said anything, scarcely ever spoke." And he proceeded to elaborate this silence. I was impressed, and conjured up a picture of the strong silent man of action of our western tradition.

"He never did anything either," went on my friend in the same solemn tone. "But he was a great man!"

After this I was prepared for the picture he painted of the then ascending Emperor Yoshihito, now dead, as a pleasant and virtuous but completely unimportant young man.

"That is as it should be," he said finally. "We ask nothing, want nothing of him but to be quiet, look impressive, and let us govern the country!"

To one who has not been in Japan the *lèse-majesté* of this is perhaps not apparent, but I assure you that it quite staggered me. The almost mythical majesty and reverence with which the imperial family is treated is difficult to comprehend. Even the language which the Emperor speaks, and in which he is addressed, is so complicated by honorifics as to be quite unintelligible to the ordinary man, and simple words like the verb "to be" become ceremonies in themselves. But I am certain that among the higher officials, and strictly behind the scenes, he must be envisaged much as contemporary Europeans envisage their kings. I cannot believe that my friend was an exception.

In Kyoto also I met a man of my own race whom I still count gleefully as friend. Miss Southern had taken me to a

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missionary meeting of some sort that I no longer remember. But I do remember distinctly that, as we sat in a long hall waiting to be addressed, down the aisle came a figure as out of place among the conservative elderly missionaries and their sober wives as a flamingo would be among quail. It was a young man, very young indeed and surprisingly beautiful, with a great shock of hair, a long sensitive face and one of the most beautiful pairs of hands I have seen on mortal. Hands have always fascinated me, and I have actually to watch my step not to write too many poems about them. This boy was dressed in a most curious garment, black, and a cross between a Japanese priest's garment and a western overcoat. The only garment I have seen in any way resembling it was the modified scholastic gown which Jack Powys—John Cowper Powys—used to wear when he lectured.

This young man came presently and was introduced. Oddly, in this remote place, he recognized my name although I had as yet published no book. But he was a subscriber to *Poetry* and almost as conversant with what was going on in my own field as my friends at home. His name, it appeared, was William Montgomery McGovern, and he was a minor Buddhist priest attached to the great temple in Kyoto, the Nishi-Hongwan-ji.

Afterwards he took me to the temple, a lovely ancient quiet place, where I heard him preach in Japanese and was shown the treasures. McGovern also published a little Buddhist paper called *Mahayana* which he sent me for several months. Later I saw him in Tokyo. But when I left Japan I lost him. He was then planning to go on an expedition into Mongolia, travelling as a holy man for two years, mapping and making ethnological and linguistic researches. "I will have no address," he said, "nor can I get mail myself." I was sorry, and for years I used to wonder whether some tribesmen had killed

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him or what this extraordinary person would develop into if he escaped.

Here in Kyoto also, in the Nijo Palace, I made two more friends whom I still cherish. They were Gertrude Emerson and Elsie Weil, later to be editors of *Asia*, the magazine of the Orient which always fascinates me. A few years ago Gertrude married an East Indian scientist, a plant physiologist named Basiswar Sen, and she has gone to live in the foothills of the Himalaya. When I met them they were travelling together, writing articles for various magazines and papers, free-lancing somewhat precariously from a financial standpoint. When spring found my sister Peggy and me alone in Tokyo they were kindness itself; and through them we acquired a small Japanese house, sans furniture, except a dining-room table and four chairs which we were self-pampering enough to rent, a few cushions and many Japanese *futon* which were taken from the closet each night to make beds on the floor. We revelled in the whole performance.

Gertrude and Elsie had also hired for us two servants, a man and his wife, who were all that one's wildest dreams could ask. They managed somehow to be friends as well as servants, though the two relationships never interfered with each other, and they were always a picture with their colorful Japanese cloths and their skillful movements. It was O Yone San, the wife, who gave me, however, one of the most embarrassing moments of my life.

We had invited to dine a prominent Japanese gentleman, Hiromichi Shugio, art expert to the Emperor, with a chestful of decorations, whom we had known in San Francisco where he was head of the Japanese art commission to the exposition. He had lived long in western countries and spoke English well, though not so well as his colleague whom I have mentioned, Jiro Harada. With him came his wife, an exquisite

little lady who was kind enough to give me lessons in sand-painting. It was naturally somewhat of an event in the household.

When Shugio San appeared we were most enthusiastic to him about the house, about the simplicity and taste of it and the rational way of living which it represented, knowing that he understood that in praising it we praised all Japanese houses. But O Yone San, who understood a word or two of English, had been listening. Suddenly, in the midst of serving the dinner—though she was ordinarily the most decorous of little maids—she burst into speech far too rapid and colloquial for us to understand. Shugio San listened with only half an ear, saying over and over, "*Hai, hai*—yes, I understand." When she had gone I asked him curiously what she had said, and to my utter amazement he replied:

"She is only saying that this is a very poor house indeed, that you pay almost no rent for it since it is so cheap, and that you do not keep it clean." This he said in the most casual and negligent way, but the effect on me was electrical. I could feel the blood mounting in my cheeks, and opened my lips to utter I know not what ineptitude. But just in time I recognized that here again was something I did not understand, and I closed my gaping mouth and merely nodded.

The next morning I posted over to Gertrude and Elsie and asked what it meant. "Why," said they, "that was very kind of O Yone San, very kind indeed. She saw that you were praising your own house, a most indecent procedure from the oriental point of view, since throughout the East one must out of politeness run down one's own possessions. She feared that the gentleman would not understand the ways of the barbarians as she did, so she was saving the family honor!" Well—one's honor seems to be a strange and variable thing, shifting



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from place to place on the earth's surface and oddly unstable in time. It was a good lesson to learn.

One night as I lay on my *futon* under the mosquito netting, I was awakened by a great pounding on the door which proved to be a boy with a telegram. On opening it I read, "Today at two o'clock we go to see Rabindranath Tagore." It was signed, Yone Noguchi.

I had been taking lessons in modern Japanese poetry from Noguchi, at that time the leading interpreter—in a psychological sense—between his country and the West in matters of literature and manners. A professor of Waseda University, writing equally well in English and Japanese, he had done much to bring about a better understanding between the two countries. He lived in Nakano, a suburb of Tokyo, whither I went for my lessons; and his floating black hair, his startlingly brilliant eyes and surprising accent in English, for all he wrote it so well, had impressed me with the fact that sometimes a person's profession seems more obvious even than his nationality. Noguchi was to me far more apparently a poet than a Japanese. I had talked to him of my admiration of Tagore, whom I had not yet met, but I did not know that Tagore was coming to Japan. So this night under my netting I was immensely delighted.

Next day we repaired to a veritable palace belonging to a wealthy Japanese who was Tagore's host. As we entered the anteroom we found several people waiting. And suddenly I felt one of those shocks at my own insufficiency which happen to visitors in other lands. For Noguchi, who had always seemed so westernized when with me, suddenly dropped from my side to his knees and bowed his head to the ground. All the others did the same, leaving me alone high in the air, lost to all civility. And I was surprised to see among the Japanese thus

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bowing ceremonially at my feet a white man, a tall thin Englishman in kimono and *tabi*, who presently rose to his feet and rescued me by offering me his hand. He was a disciple of Tagore's, I was told. "Disciple" seems to me the correct word for the followers of this extraordinary man, whom so many of us hold in an admiration little short of veneration. And this in spite of the fact that his friend and poetic colleague, Sarojini Naidu, told me once most amusingly that Tagore was "a fine lyric poet," but that it was absurd of the West to insist on looking at him as a "living Buddha." To me he will always seem a great spiritual leader as well as a great poet.

He sat that day on a cushion on the floor, at the head of a long table only a few inches high, on which were various exquisite pieces of oriental carving. Noguchi and I sat on cushions farther down the table, in places of distinct oriental inferiority, I felt, which suited my feelings perfectly. Tagore was impressive beyond anything I could have imagined by the very simplicity and sincerity of the man, one of those people who "convince by their presence." He wore a simple Indian garment, over which he had placed a Japanese *haori*, the formal overgarment. His hair was then quite long, hanging in curly locks close to his neck, and surprisingly it was not black, not white, but both, so that one lock was black and the next white, with no shading of grey. His voice was high and gentle, the Indian voice to which I was then unaccustomed. His face seemed to shine with an inner light of peace. I do not remember much that he said, only how I felt in his presence.

Tagore has always seemed to me a man who has solved all his personal problems with a true spiritual wisdom; yet, since all men are mortal, the greater impersonal problem of race has baffled him. The relationship of the conquered to the conquering race is too difficult for any but a Christ to meet, and Tagore becomes curiously human when he speaks of

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England, so that the peace goes from him. On that rack he is broken, yet it is a magnificent failure.

On one of the later occasions when I have met him in the West, he told me an incident, however, which proves that even here his gentle humor still lives. "A friend of mine," said he, "happened to be in a British secret service bureau in India when an operator came in to make a report. 'Suspect number 3 in C class, Rabindranath Tagore, has just left Santiniketan for Calcutta.' I did not like that," said Tagore in his gentle high voice with an engaging smile; "I am not working against England, as my whole life proves, but if they believe I am, I would wish to be 'suspect number 1 in A class,' not 'number 3 in C class!'"

During this spring in Tokyo I became deeply devoted to Gertrude Emerson and Elsie Weil. Gertrude, small, gentle, and self-possessed, made an odd contrast to Elsie, who was tall and slender and singularly beautiful with the best type of Hebrew beauty. They were, as I have said, free-lancing as correspondents, and, because the boats went only at certain intervals, their dead-lines were rather far apart. Elsie's method of work—Gertrude's was always more methodical—was to put off starting an article till the day before the boat sailed. Then she would go into a veritable spasm which lasted through the night and till after the departure of the boat next day. During this time she lived chiefly on coffee and cigarettes. By morning the article was usually finished, in a great scrawl on innumerable sheets of yellow paper, but no clean copy had yet been made. Gertrude would spring into the breach and they would begin to type it. When the time came to set out for the boat, which sailed from Yokohama, they would continue the typing in the rickshaws, Elsie shouting dictation from hers and Gertrude pounding out the stuff on her knees, in a second. During the train-ride the typewriter clicked frantically, to the vast

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surprise of the Japanese, who are always so quiet and controlled in public. Ditto the rickshaws in Yokohama. Arrived at the ship, they ensconced themselves in a corner of the dining saloon till the last possible second, when they would leap up, cram the type-sheets and whatever remained of the yellow scrawls into an envelope, thrust it into the hands of a passenger and scramble down the gangplank as it was being lifted. It was an amazing performance, and made me feel quite at home.

Somewhere in Japan, too, though I no longer remember just where, we went to the house of two bachelor Americans for dinner. Their names also have escaped me, but their house never. They were engaged in collecting oriental art objects for various American museums, and the house was a fairyland. In it were collected indescribable jade, inlaid steel, pottery, and rainbow stuffs and embroideries. They brought them out for us and spread them round till I sat in a sea of beauty so dazzling that I was positively drunken with the colors and the textures.

But here also I saw for the first time what happens to the white man in the East. These men had formerly resided in India and in China, and their behavior was more characteristic of westerners in those hot countries than in Japan.

When we arrived one of them was absent, playing tennis to "keep fit." He came in presently and lolled in a deep chair, a tall athletic figure with a long glass at his elbow and a cigarette in his mouth. Presently he said: "It is warm here. Shall we open a window?" When I assented he did not rise but clapped his hands languidly together three times, so languidly that the hands depended limply from his wrists. Instantly a panel in the wall slid away and a silent oriental servant—they kept seven of them—glided in. "Boy," said my friend as lan-

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guidly as he had clapped, "open the window." It was done. Presently I asked for a cigarette. It was no discourtesy on his part not to have offered it, since few women smoked at that time and it was not customary to offer them the means thereto. But the cigarettes lay at his elbow, and any man I knew would have risen. Not he, however. Again he clapped his hands; the panel slid open, and he said, "Boy, give the honorable lady a cigarette." That peculiar combination of athletic strenuosity and complete laziness is to be met nowhere but in the far places of Asia and Africa.

In Tokyo also Jiro Harada and his beautiful wife showed us the perfect courtesy of old Japan. They piloted us indefatigably over numerous art galleries and collections and places of interest. They entertained for us both at their home and abroad. And Harada San made arrangements for us to take ceremonial tea at a special tea-house with a famous master. Japanese ceremonial tea, as it is usually given, occupies about two hours and is a spiritual delight. The quiet atmosphere of calculated beauty, the ancient and charming ritual, and the overtones of Buddhistic contemplation give the soul a moment of clear breath. But westerners, and I suspect the more modern and westernized Japanese also, cannot enjoy this atmosphere for over two hours without tiring. This day, however, Harada San had arranged for us to see the ancient and elaborate form which lasts practically all day. At the end we were exhausted. Our legs were painfully cramped from sitting on the floor, even though we were once for a few moments invited to walk in the garden, and our bodies cried for more substantial nourishment than the slight collation of crisp fried fish and clear soup which was served as lunch. I remember, as we walked away with great strides at the end of the afternoon, longing passionately for a huge slab of nearly

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raw beefsteak served on a yellow kitchen plate! And I understood perfectly the drunken interlude at the *Noh* drama performance.

It was now May, and Peggy and I, as good Sierra Clubbers, wished to climb Mount Fuji. But it was still too early, the snow too deep on the slopes. So we consoled ourselves by taking a ten-day walking trip around the base of it. The trip was a sheer delight, and the weather perfect. We walked through foothills blazing with azaleas and other flowering shrubs, staying at little village inns, shooting the rapids of the mountain streams and acquainting ourselves with the simple and very beautiful rural life of Japan. And always the perfect cone of Mount Fuji, not yet marred by the great earthquake, rose to the left of us, hanging in the sky in indescribable beauty, almost unearthly in its perfection. One wearies of the many pictures of Fuji, but the mountain itself, on a deep moonlit night when the odor of flowers rises in the nostrils and the sheen of its snow cap is a clear crystalline silver, is almost too beautiful to be borne.

This Japan of long ago shimmers before me now like a mirage, a mirage in time, not space. Because I have not been there again I can understand only with my head—which after all is a very one-sided way of understanding anything—how it can have turned into the ruthless, truculent aggressor nation it is today, the menace to the entire Orient. I would there were some cosmic psychiatrist who could treat these national neuroses as the mob illnesses they are! The rest of the world is all too apt to learn to hate the patient before the illness wears off.

Soon afterwards we left Japan.

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## 7

# China—the Interior

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WELL—AND there was China!

I was as totally unprepared for it as an Eskimo would have been. I had never read a book about China in my life, nor talked seriously with anyone who had been there, and when I knew I was going I refused to begin. My theory about going to new countries is very definite. Don't clutter yourself up beforehand with other people's impressions, because then your own will be clouded. Take it straight. See what you yourself think of it and then, during your stay if you wish, or later, read up about those things you can't find out for yourself. Then you will know where to place them in a framework of your own making.

So I went trustingly to China, and it hit me like a blow in the solar plexus. It knocked me down and tramped on me. It battered in my brain and left me a changed being.

I may as well admit right at the beginning that I didn't understand China. I was like the "old China hand" who maintains firmly that the more you see the less you know about it. I was there nearly twenty years ago; I lived in "the interior" far from the treaty ports, and I saw it undiluted, in its strong original essence. I wrote my first book, *Profiles from China*, about it: a series of sketches in free verse of people and things

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I had actually seen and smelled and tasted. They were done on the spot with scrupulous integrity, and even today, when the poems might almost have been written by someone else, I still find them vivid pictures. I find too a sort of shock in them, the shock of surprise and dismay with which a western optimist comes up against the inescapable fact that the greater part of the people on the earth's surface have not changed since the Year One. As I saw China, Abraham or Noah might have felt at home in it. Certainly nobody born later. And I am frank to say that I was miserable all the time I was there, and that I have not entirely recovered from that misery yet.

But even so China ultimately got me, as something strong and high-flavored and autochthonous will get one. After I returned to America I began to study the history of the great periods of Chinese civilization and to soak in the relics of her ancient grandeur, her poetry, her paintings, her ceramics, her carvings. And from China, and Japan, I extended my interest to the rest of the Orient. I am now convinced, as many intelligent westerners are, that the Occident is spiritually bankrupt—even our Christianity is an imported and doubtless altered eastern religion—and that in this all-important respect the East is immeasurably our superior. Moreover I have taken a taste for the oriental in art, literature, and mystic thinking which has gradually undermined my interest in western civilization. Today European thinking and European art seem to me, with few exceptions, so sanitary as to be sterile, and so material as to be shallow and superficial. If a future civilization of any ultimate value should arise, it must surely be compounded of the mechanical advances of the West and the spiritual content of the East.

But this has been a slow growth with me, an aftermath through the years of that first contact. So that in a sense the



chapter which follows is a throwback to the self I was then. For all the deeper side of the Orient was a blank to me while I was in China. I saw practically none of it. Only the sociological side thrust itself at me. And here on this string I can thread only the things I saw then.

It was my nerves, I think, that found China so hard to endure. Reared as I had been in an atmosphere of western cleanliness, the sight, and the smell, of the ever-present and terrible diseases of China, of the incredible filth, the squalor and the misery of the people, of the pitiful makeshifts to which they are forced, and the abysmal ignorance of the populace—these things were almost too much for me to bear nervously. I have seen my sister Peg, usually a most self-controlled person, come home after a walk of an hour or so on the streets of Wusih, where we lived, to cast herself face downward on the floor shaken with sobs, from sheer nervous exhaustion. And if I did not do so myself I often yearned to.

When we walked in these streets we were always followed by a dense crowd of people of the lower classes who dogged our footsteps, friendly enough but infinitely remote and infinitely curious. The crowd was especially dense if Janet, then eight years old, was with us. Many of these people were diseased, with terrible skin diseases which most of us in the West see only in the pages of medical books, with disorders of the eyes and scalp, with venereal diseases, with leprosy. Many of them suffered from the minor physical deformities which western surgery clears up at birth: too many fingers, odd balls and protuberances on the ears and nose, double harelips and imperfect palates. Most of them were clothed in rags which must be seen to be understood. And all of them were unwashed. These crowds followed us patiently but persistently. Before us the streets, some of them so narrow that I could almost touch the walls on either side with my outstretched arms, might be rela-

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tively empty. Behind us they were always filled with a solid wall of people. Whenever we stopped, they did. If we paused at one of the fascinating shops with their open fronts, where artisans like those of Europe in the Middle Ages made admirable objects before our eyes with the great skill of China, the following crowd closed in about us, breathing in our necks, picking up and fingering our clothes, touching our hats and chattering among themselves. The pity I felt for them and the unavoidable bodily shrinking grew to be a physical ache in my breast that never left me. It is small wonder that I found it hard to endure.

Wusih, where I spent the greater part of my many months in China, is in the province of Kiang-su. The name, with true Chinese indirection, means "no tin." It has a population of some 200,000 Chinese, and at that time it boasted eight whites. Our advent brought the white population to twelve. It is a commercial city, known to be prosperous, with flour mills, spinning mills, and other factories. The people there are fortunate enough to eat three meals a day, though such luxury is hardly common in many places. Filthy canals, among them the Grand Canal, pass through it, causing it sometimes to be called by foreigners the Venice of China. The stench from the canals was only less than the stench from the uncovered toilet-pots which lined the streets openly. The contents of these pots were regularly spread upon the fields for manure—and remember the diseases! If I speak openly, forgive me. China as I saw it was strong meat.

We lived at the mission station with my sister, who was one of the eight, the others being the evangelical missionary, the educational missionary, and the medical missionary, with their wives, and a woman nurse. The mission, which belonged to the American Episcopal Church, had two compounds, the hospital being on separate grounds. The compound where we

lived was clean and sanitary, even charming, with its large church, vine-covered buildings, trees, and large open lawn where the tennis and ball courts were. It was walled, of course, and in it one was free from the merely curious, though the students and school children and all Chinese with legitimate reasons came and went constantly. Some privacy was necessary on psychological grounds, as well as physical ones. Missionaries are human and must have some quiet place to retire, or become hopelessly warped. There we lived in physical comfort. We had a clean western-style house, capable of being heated in the bitter cold of winter, good food, and three servants for the five of us.

I am so often asked my opinion of the value of foreign missions in China that I might as well give my answer here. The answer is that I have never been able to decide. I lived for months in this station, and I saw in the course of traveling about the country many other stations of various denominations, and innumerable missionaries. But I have only my own observations to guide me, and they are contradictory. I have known missionaries who would be an addition to the communal life of any city. Such an one is my sister, and such is Gouverneur F. Mosher, then head of the mission in Wusih, now Episcopal Bishop of the Philippine Islands. He is intelligent, human, sympathetic and forward-looking. Unquestionably Wusih profited by his living there. And I know others like him. But on the other hand I have known missionaries so petty and bigoted and warped that I cringed for my country which had sent them. They make of their stations little centers of bad feeling and prejudice which can only result in harm. I do not doubt the value of the medical missions anywhere in China; it is always valuable to relieve suffering. But for the rest—who am I to hold an opinion of any value on so moot a question?

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It might not be out of place here, however, to speak of the missionaries in two other parts of the world where I have since lived. In North Africa I found the problem negligible, since the Arabs treat them with courtesy but leave them strictly alone. In the islands of the South Seas, however, they have, in my opinion, done nothing but harm. They have grafted on the simple natives ideas which these are unable to assimilate, and by a stupid insistence on Victorian modesty they have brought tuberculosis in their wake. In general I should say that the value of missions depends on the state of the country which they visit, and on the possible social good they can do in the individual civilization which they encounter.

One thing about the missionaries in China I feel, however. As a class they understand the country far better than the commercial people, the only others who live there in any numbers. It was appalling to me to see how many American and English commercial people, who had lived for years in such ports as Shanghai or Hongkong or even in Peking, had not even the most rudimentary understanding of the Chinese. How could they have? They come in contact only with their own servants, the tradespeople and an occasional westernized Chinese of the upper classes, all of whom have something to gain from them and are putting on western manners for their sake. Of the real country and its people they know practically nothing. It is a pity, for from such sources so much garbled information comes.

Somewhere I read once a statement by a very wise man. "Give me your facts," said he, "and I will tell you your opinions." I think I shall try here to give you certain things which I know about China and let you decide what my opinions may have been. I shall not include here anything which I set down in *Profiles*, since anyone who may be interested can read

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them there. Instead I shall pick out certain incidents with which I came in contact.

But first I would better qualify the statement I made a while ago that I did not understand China. I meant by that that I did not understand the Chinese mind, nor its thinking. The Chinese heart I understand well enough. It is exactly like our own. The denizens of the Flowery Kingdom are hungry, in love, angry, or merely curious exactly as we are. They love their children, they are kind-hearted or cruel-hearted, they are patient and full of humor, honest or dishonest as we are. But these things are framed in a social matrix so different from our own, these emotions are often set off by such, to us, startling triggers that the total result is incomprehensible to me. My sister Louise, because for long years she has lived among them and loved them, understands much of it. But to me each separate incident must be explained before I understand it.

Now for the incidents.

One day, passing along a street, I saw an old woman with a vindictive face savagely beating a younger one with a stick beside the road. A large crowd stood about watching, evidently siding with the older woman. That the old woman was furious and the younger in despair, I understood well enough. That was the heart. The reason came from the mind.

It happened that we knew the people. Here is the story behind the event. The younger woman was the daughter-in-law of the elder. The son and husband, an only child, was an educated young man, very pleasant and gentle, who spoke some English and was in the employ of the railroads. He had been married only three months before at a rather elaborate wedding which we attended. The girl was the bride in my poem "The Feast" in *Profiles*, and she was a charming little person. The marriage had of course been arranged by the mother, but

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the two young people had taken to one another and were now really in love.

Then came the difficulties. The young man was ordered by the railroads to another province, and expected to be away from home for two years. Custom—the ancient custom of China—seemed to demand that the bride stay in Wusih to be a sort of glorified servant to the old woman. Many Chinese mothers-in-law would not have demanded such a sacrifice but this old woman did. The young bride, however, confronted by such a prospect, demurred and insisted that she be allowed to go with her husband. For this she was beaten, and for this the crowd sided with the older woman, since the orders of the mother-in-law are not to be disobeyed.

Parenthetically I should perhaps remark that this was old China. Certain elements in new China, I am told, go as far the other way. But what westerner would have understood what I saw? or the mentality behind the following story, which was told me by Mr. Mosher when the final decision was handed down?

In a little village which we visited, two days by houseboat from Wusih, lived a rich man named Mr. Ku. I met him, a tall thin elderly Chinese suffering from the ravages of the opium habit, from which, however, he had been cured. He was the wealthiest man in the village, a sort of local overlord, and he owned among other things a lumberyard. Lumber is very valuable—most of it seemed then to come from Oregon—and anything left unguarded in China, even the grain in the fields, is almost automatically stolen. So Mr. Ku had a watchman who lived at the yard. One night this watchman caught a man stealing lumber.

Now the man was not a thief by profession—many reputable people might be stealing lumber in China—but a man of some position in the village with "face" to save, and the saving of

face is of paramount importance. Therefore the watchman scented profit and, instead of reporting him, blackmailed him. Steadily he demanded sums of money. But he was too importunate. Finally he drove his prey to desperation. Then the thief did the proper thing under the circumstances, he committed suicide "to protest." He hanged himself in the lumberyard, before the watchman's door, and thereby automatically removed all blame from himself for the incident of the theft and cast the onus on the watchman-blackmailer.

But the story was not yet finished. It happened that the thief had belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, which has had missionaries in China for several centuries. The Chinese Roman Church is in some places entirely in the hands of the Chinese themselves, with no white man as director, and the result is that it has become strictly Chinese in character and many of its acts would not even be understood, let alone approved, by its progenitors. In this case the members of the local branch of the church felt that their prestige would be endangered if they did nothing about the loss of this lamb from their flock. They decided to sue. And since the watchman obviously had no money, having spent all his ill-gotten gains, they sued Mr. Ku.

The case came to trial and lasted interminably, as such things do in China. It was, you see, a case of "influence." Practically all Chinese magistrates at that time were subject to such influence. And the complications of the law were infinite. I have been told that after a case had been going on for some months nobody, not even the judge, could any longer be sure which was the defendant and which the plaintiff. In this case, although Mr. Ku was a man of importance, it developed that the Roman Catholic Church was of still more importance. The upshot of the matter was that a fine of six hundred dollars was levied against Mr. Ku, although the old man had known noth-

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ing whatever about the whole affair except that his lumber was still in place!

One more incident I may perhaps tell, since my family was in Wusih during the entire episode, though I myself had then left. It was called in the American press report which I saw "The Battle of Wusih," and it occupied two inches in the newspapers. Here, as I heard it told at the time, is the inside story of the battle. Certain details escape me, but they are of little importance.

It had started as so many events in China start, with a revolution, one of those revolutions which usually begin in the South and blow like a dust storm over the face of the land. I no longer remember exactly which side was which, but that also matters little. Who can now remember the difference between the Goths and the Visigoths? Let us say then that the southern army was besieging Wusih, and that a northern army was defending it. But it is certain that the sympathies of the city were with the besieging army.

The gates of the city were closed—those great gates in the wall which surrounded us as it had surrounded the city since the days of King Arthur in England. Within them the people cowered, uncertain of the outcome, terrified and nervously taut. All the wealthy and powerful of the town congregated, as they always congregated for safety, in the foreign compound, in this case the compound of the mission hospital. There they thrashed the matter out and decided to buy off the northern army. After much dickering, the army agreed to take \$4.50 Mex per man, about \$2.10 in our money as the exchange then was. Accordingly the matter was amicably settled and the northern army withdrew.

But there was face to save. Before they withdrew, the army staged a battle. They fired off, outside the wall, as much ammunition as they could spare, plus a number of tin cans filled



with fire-crackers to add to the effect. The guns were fired into the air, and the only fatality was a farmer who was plowing in a field at some distance, on whose unhappy head a shell descended. There were also a few hot-headed students with patriotic ideas who sallied forth to join the battle, and who had to be somewhat beaten up before matters could be satisfactorily explained to them.

All this is the comic opera side of China. Now comes the sinister side. After the defending army withdrew and the southern army took possession, someone, I never knew just who, captured five men, some of them hardly more than boys, who were accused of having been spies. Just what they could have revealed in so sanguinary an affair I do not know, but they were summarily tried and sentenced to death.

The open space beside the railroad station, which is at some distance outside the walls, was chosen as the execution ground, and the greater part of the city repaired there to witness the sight. Do not forget that the common people, ignorant of what had gone on, had been shut in the city for several days in a state of great nervous strain, and that they needed satisfaction. The execution began in the morning and was of the protracted nature of certain Chinese executions, lengthened by formalities and ceremonies. My sister says now that they were not tortured, but I am certain I was told at the time that they were. Ultimately the men were beheaded and the bodies left exposed for several days as a warning to the people. All this took time. By dusk only three of the victims were dead. The other two, the youngest of them, had been waiting all day, watching a horrible death come slowly closer to them.

But by dusk the people were tired of blood. Probably they bethought them of the fact that now three times as many had been killed in the aftermath as in the battle. At all events they suddenly decided not to prolong matters any further. And

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they informed the two remaining prisoners that they would not, after all, kill them—and that they would better go home to dinner now!

So much for the incidents.

The mission hospital which had been the refuge of the powerful was the scene of many tragi-comedies. It was clean and sanitary and as well run as was humanly possible with limited resources in such surroundings. But for years the Chinese refused to patronize it, preferring—as who does not?—doctors of their own race. I well remember the doctor's joy while I was there because they had had two confinement cases in a single winter. And the Chinese mistrusted its cleanliness. Outside the main building was an old house, empty of all save the walls, which was used as a sort of outstation for those who preferred it. The greater number of patients chose to bunk here, bringing their own unsanitary bedding, rather than to occupy the white beds of the hospital proper.

Perhaps after all they were not so blind as we would imagine, for countless generations of living in the filth of China have developed an immunity to disease in the race which is startling to us. An attack of a disease of such virulence that it would kill four white men will only slightly inconvenience a Chinese. Smallpox, so deadly to the unvaccinated in the temperate zones of the West, is endemic there all the time and epidemic every autumn when the winter clothes are taken out. Yet they think so little of it that the patients are commonly seen in the streets and almost nobody ever dies of it. Indeed they call it "the Heavenly Flowering Sickness."

Another frequent occurrence at the hospital was the arrival, in great haste, of people who had eaten sulphur matches. The Chinese are subject at times to violent attacks of *chi*, or temper, during which they often try to commit suicide, and eating



SELLING WATER-CHESTNUTS ON ONE OF THE BRIDGES IN WUSIH

(Photo by Elizabeth Hammond)



## CHINA—THE INTERIOR

matches was then a favorite form. But they usually repent when the temper has subsided and run for help.

Of the social life of the city I saw more than most visitors do, and that side I enjoyed. Because they knew and liked my sister, and desired to do the correct thing by foreign guests, a number of Chinese families invited me to their homes with her. For the most part these were middle-class families, but one at least was rich and influential, and some were poor. We were received with unfailing courtesy and kindness, and often feasted. I was cut off by a barrier of language, but across it I met a number of people whom I liked immensely. I learned to love Chinese food, which I think the most delicious of any food I know, and to prefer chop-sticks to knives and forks. I learned a few politeness phrases in Chinese and ceased very soon to be disconcerted by the invariable first questions when I was introduced to anyone. These questions always began—through an interpreter, of course—with “How old are you? How many children have you?” and were usually followed by “Why have you come here? Where are you going when you leave?” and others of the sort. That was simply a different form of courtesy. My sister, standing beside me, would usually translate not only the obvious meaning of the remarks but also the implication behind them, for the Chinese are far too complex to mean exactly what they say on all occasions. So I learned that they considered us to be barbarians—for which I can certainly not blame them. Indeed I chose for my Chinese name a character which means “northern barbarian,” and in the first edition I signed my *Profiles* with it, as well as with my English name. I thought it might amuse any Chinese who came across the book.

There were moreover occasional comic interludes in our life in Wusih which were very welcome. One of these was the fire

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in the schoolhouse for older Chinese Christian boys. Owing to space restrictions, this was at some distance from the compound in a Chinese building. The fire occurred just after dark one winter evening and was announced by an unearthly din of howls and beaten tin pans and gongs, a noise not of dismay but calculated to drive away the fire devils. As soon as we heard the noise we wished to go out and see what was burning, but Mr. Mosher restrained us at first. The people of our city were not antiforeign. Indeed it was rather chic and amusing to have foreigners there as a rule, and we furnished great entertainment with our odd ways. But at any moment of high nervous tension the crowd might turn on us as outlet for pent-up emotion, so it behooved us to remain indoors. However, as soon as Mr. Mosher heard that it was our own building which was burning, he thought the danger slight. The school was a boarding school, but only the separate building housing the classrooms was afire; lessons had of course been finished for the day, and only a caretaker occupied the place. We were therefore permitted to go, though warned to watch the temper of the crowd and return at once if it grew nasty.

The schoolhouse was situated beside a canal, and we streamed along the road beside it with the crowd, which proved to be merely curious and definitely enjoyed the noise it was making. Presently way was cleared for the police in their ill-fitting western uniforms of cheap blue cloth. Each policeman held aloft a torch of twisted bamboo which gave off a smoky and flickering light. And after them came the firemen! I wish I could make you see these firemen. They were dressed in patched rags, being occasional only and recruited from the lower classes. But each man wore over his rags a new and gleaming yellow satin ribbon, worn as the grand cordon of the Legion of Honor is worn by diplomats, over one shoulder and fastened at the waist on the opposite side. The ribbon bore Chinese

characters in black. And on each head, some queued and some shaven, was a brand-new and incredibly shining brass Roman helmet. The total effect was devastating. With them the firemen brought their engines—I suppose you would call them engines. They were containers like large washtubs on wheels, each surmounted by a hand-pump of the old donkey-engine type to which a hose was attached.

When we reached the schoolhouse, we saw that the roof was merrily ablaze, sending up showers of sparks against the dark sky. The light from the fire and from the flares of the police—whose only duty seemed to be to light the affair, since they restrained nobody—was amply sufficient. The firemen brought up water from the canal in pails and poured it into the tub of the engine. Then one man held his thumb over the nozzle of the hose, to restrain the water till a sufficient pressure had been developed, and four other men pumped, two to a side of the crossbar, which worked with a seesaw motion. When the man holding the nozzle could stand it no longer, his face screwed up with effort, the thumb popped off and a stream of water quite as large as that from a small garden hose shot out fully twenty feet and was trained on the fire.

And all this took place amid a scene of indescribable confusion. People stood everywhere, paying not the slightest attention to the police or the firemen; the schoolboys had congregated in great excitement and kept dashing into the building to rescue their books; the flares flickered, the gongs crashed, and the peopled howled to drive away the fire devils. For once nobody paid the slightest attention to us.

And the fire-fighters themselves were none too calm. I saw two of them, each dragging a hose after him, run antlike towards the building in such haste and indecision that neither of them noticed that they had crossed one another's path, so that the two hoses became entangled, and quite cut off the

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water supply from either. And two schoolboys, running in terror around the building in opposite directions, came suddenly together and cracked their heads with a resounding plop, so that they fell down breathless.

But oddly enough, so many were the tiny lines of hose that before long they did actually put the fire out, when no more than the elaborate roof had burned off. In its own way it was a triumph.

The Chinese themselves have a delightful sense of humor, rich and varied in their poetry and present in their daily life. Without it they would all go mad. Even the common people are fond of practical jokes. I remember one incident where a knowledge of this fact saved us from great inconvenience, if nothing more.

Eight of us had gone one day in rickshaws to the Village of the Mud Idols below the Sacred Mountain, which rears its beautiful somber crown a few miles from the city. (Tai Shan in Shantung is the great Sacred Mountain.) When we returned, we paid the rickshaw runners two silver dimes apiece. Now there is a sort of convention among the runners that if a passenger pays him the exact fare, this passenger is "in the know" and not to be annoyed. The runner therefore trots off without a word. But if the passenger pays more than the standard fare, he is a greenhorn and may be made to pay still more. So they are invariably ugly when overpaid. In this case we knew as well as they did that the fare was twenty coppers. But to carry with us so many big copper pennies was so inconvenient that we preferred to pay them in silver. Moreover, such is the complexity of Chinese currency that a silver dime is worth, not ten pennies, but twelve. So we had overpaid the poor things outrageously, by giving them nearly ten cents in our money for running at top speed for four miles. Accordingly they became extremely quarrelsome, shouting and



threatening us with their fists. We were in a lonely part of town; all but one of us were women, including several visitors, and the eight threatening men might have ended by doing us harm.

But the one man among us was Charles Ogilvie, a missionary from Peking, an admirable character and one who knew his Chinese thoroughly, though here he could not speak the dialect. He was quite equal to the occasion. He motioned that he would pay more, whereupon the men all calmed down. Next he lined them up in a straight row, considerably to their surprise, and finally he went down the line putting solemnly into each outstretched palm a single peanut. Now peanuts are the cheapest thing in China, so this was only a joke. The men looked at first nonplussed, then sheepish, and finally they burst into a roar of laughter and trotted off in high good humor.

The Sacred Mountain, to which we had been that day, was a constant source of pleasure to me, a pleasure so keen that at times it hurt. One could see it from many places in the city, and in the dusk it showed blue-violet and was so beautiful that it took my breath. Indeed all the great natural beauty of China, the jutting mountains, the pale green fields, the flowering fruit-trees in the spring, and the broad expanses of brown water were my only solace then, for I was frankly unhappy. When one is unhappy, beauty can stab with an unearthly joy which is half pain. And I found this beauty not only in nature but all about me. The lovely decorative signs of the city, Chinese red and black and gold, the deep rich brown of the walls and shadows—such a brown as Rembrandt loved to paint—the deliciously graceful roofs with their gnomish figures on the cornices, the rich dark blues and greens of the satin clothes, and above all the great beauty of the Chinese skin color, which is like bronze over blush pink and makes

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our own white skin seem somehow indecent as a naked pink pig—these things fed my spirit. If I had been painting then, I think I could have managed, and it is small wonder to me that a number of my painter friends love China.

The little I saw of their art too and their music fascinated me, and their amazing skill with their hands—all things I could understand without words. One day I overheard my sister's teacher reciting poetry, or rather chanting it as they do all their classic verse, in a strange plaintive cadence that was more like the pitched speaking voice than like singing as we know it, and yet partook of both. I was enchanted, and with my sister's help I took down several of these chanting tunes and wrote a little note about them for *Poetry*. Later Louise went into the matter much more thoroughly, and a year-book edited by Arthur Waley, Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, published the result of her researches. She found—for those who may be interested—that in spite of the monosyllabic nature of Chinese words and in spite of the classic ideas of prosody, this chanting is distinctly quantitative, as our own reading is. Sometimes it is so definitely rhythmic as to be in almost obvious waltz time.

During my entire stay in Wusih the only outside friends I saw were Gertrude Emerson and Elsie Weil, who stopped off to visit me. They arrived at two o'clock at night. Mr. Mosher had taken the trouble to go down to the wall around the city and to arrange, by means of a little "persuasion," that the great gates, which were always closed at night, should be opened for them when they desired to come into the city. He also sent a house-boy who spoke a little pidgin to pilot them. But at the moment when they reached the gate a superior officer happened to be there who had not been persuaded, and he refused them entrance, so that they were obliged to go back and spend the rest of the night in the dirty railroad station.

When they finally got through in the morning, however, it was apparent that they were good sports, and they made light of the incident. We walked around the city in a pouring rain, and they left that evening, somewhat dampened in spirits.

Speaking of house-boys and pidgin reminds me of two small things that happened in the compound, one to me, which merit telling. Soon after I arrived, I went to call on the wife of one of the missionaries and she came down laughing to tell me that her boy had told her, "Down-side have got one piecee man belong womán." This needs elucidation. "Down-side" is clear enough and means only "downstairs." "Piecee" is always added before every noun to replace an elusive category word found in Chinese. "Man" is a generic term in this case meaning "human being," and "belong" means "is." Therefore the sentence reads, "Downstairs there is a human being who is a woman."

I never quite mastered the intricacies of pidgin, but I did learn enough to appreciate what occurred one day when another visitor arrived unexpectedly and was announced thus: "Parlor-side have got number one man heaven pidgin." "Pidgin" means "business." Therefore this sentence reads, "In the parlor the head man (number one man) in the business of heaven is waiting." In other words the Bishop!

Staying at the mission as I was, I naturally attended a number of Christian ceremonies, sometimes conducted by Chinese. I also saw the non-Christian marriage rites. But the only real Chinese religious ceremony I saw there was of so great beauty and strangeness that even as I saw it I could not quite believe my eyes, and now it seems that I dreamed it. This was the Spring Festival in the Temple of Confucius.

The festival began, if my memory serves, at midnight on a night in March and lasted till dawn. It took place in a temple which consisted chiefly of a rather large covered space, some-

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thing like a raised stage but without walls, which opened on to a still larger open courtyard. We arrived early so as to see the preparations.

In the covered space were set out many ancient and curious musical instruments, drums of all sizes from a great one bigger than a man, with a deep resonant tone, to small ones mounted on the ends of sticks and struck with shot on strings which gave out a tiny high ping; odd-shaped pieces of jade suspended to a framework and struck with a stick; bundles of reeds tied together which had a peculiar plaintive and whispering sound, and many others. The tablet of Confucius and those of his ten favorite disciples occupied the position of honor in the middle of the stage, and before them were spread cooked food, candles, and incense as offerings. In front of this were the sacrificial carcasses of three animals: a cow, a sheep, and a pig. The two smaller were skinned, but the cow had had the hide removed only from the body. It still adhered to the head, and the skin itself was draped over the body like a strange cape. All three were kneeling and their glazed eyes seemed to be fixed on the tablet.

When the ceremony began, we retired with the crowd into the courtyard and stood at the edge, space being reserved under shelters of matting in the center for the prominent men of the city. The courtyard was lit with sputtering and flickering bamboo flares. The somber crowd was intent and motionless. A deep hush was over all but the officiating clergyman—I do not know the exact term; it is certainly not priest—who spoke and chanted in a deep and resonant voice. The curious musical instruments throbbed and sighed. The patient animals kneeled before us. It was all incredibly strange and beautiful, something out of the deep past of the race.

There was, however, one modern note, and it was incongruous to the point of the ridiculous. When the prominent men,

about fifty politicians, merchants, and scholars, moved in to their places in the center, they knelt and performed the ceremonial kotow. In their dark green and dark blue silk gowns they would have been a part of the whole, except that each wore a narrow-brimmed derby hat! So there were the fifty bowlers being solemnly bumped on the ground three times, then raised, then three times more, raised again and at last three more bumps to make the necessary nine! To have laughed would have been suicidal, but I confess that I choked suddenly and disturbed my neighbors, who regarded me angrily.

It is always necessary for me, somewhere along the line, to restrain myself from talking about Wusih. The place was one of the great influences of my life, and, as some of my long-suffering friends can testify, I can go on half the night about the strange blend of sordidness, tragedy, beauty, and humor which I saw there. This, I think, is the place for such restraint to be exercised.

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# China of the Tourists

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OF THE rest of China we saw not much more than the usual surface seen by the foreign traveller. We spent some weeks in Peking, met a number of the charming western diplomats in the foreign city who live so largely as they would at home, and to whom China seems to be a sort of stage backdrop. We came to know Shanghai rather well, with its hustling foreign trade and its queer whites, as well as its substantial quiet ones. We saw the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs; we went to Hankow; we travelled on the Yangtze River boats and got as far south as Hongkong. Canton we did not see, as it was then in revolution and the way was closed to foreign women.

But even outside of Wusih we turned aside somewhat from the beaten track. We climbed Tai Shan, the Great Sacred Mountain under Heaven, and looked down over the green and brown earth below us, feeling the sweep of eternity round us. Since one of my poems, which has been much reprinted, deals with Tai Shan I shall not go into that here. And we made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Confucius.

China's greatest sage lies buried near the city of Chü-fou in Shantung province. The city is six miles from the railroad, and it was necessary for us to descend from the train at a way station at two o'clock in the morning and spend the rest of

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the February night in a cold and dirty railway depot. The country was much overridden by bandits at that time, and the station-master told us that he would arrange for an escort of soldiers to accompany us on the lonely way. In the morning, waiting breakfastless except for a hard-boiled egg apiece, in the bitter cold of a north China dawn, we saw a band of men approaching so indescribably ragged, patched and savage-looking that we were sure the station was being attacked by bandits. But the station-master assured us calmly that they were the soldiers. With considerable apprehension we climbed into the springless Peking carts and set out, surrounded by our strange escort. But the station-master was right. Savage as these men looked, they guarded us faithfully.

The journey was a nightmare of protracted cold. Poor little Janet whimpered steadily beside me. The car nearly jolted my spine to pieces, and the wild country through which we passed for many weary miles looked curiously sinister. But all this was forgotten when we reached Chü-fou and saw the magnificent temple of Confucius with its breath-taking carved dragon pillars. And the tomb, if tomb it can be called, was to me worth far more physical discomfort than I endured. It is so simple! In a land of intricacies and gimcracks, their greatest sage is buried under a mound of grassy earth only, a mound that slopes upward like a small rounded hill, and is encircled by hoary trees. Before it stands a single stone tablet, mounted on a stone altar, on which are carved the characters, "Teacher of Ten Thousand Years." Around him in the same graveyard lie five thousand of his family and descendants, many of them in elaborate tombs. But the simplicity and spiritual grandeur of that mound of earth strikes deeper than all pomp, deep into the taproots of the national integrity which makes China, in spite of the unhappy situation in which she now is, one of the greatest nations of the earth.

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We stayed too for several days at a mission station at Hwai Yuan, and there we were made aware of another of the great sorrows of China, the flooding of her rivers and the consequent destruction and famine. Hwai Yuan is near such a river, on which the whole life of the surrounding country depends. Nearly every year it floods the neighboring fertile valley. Some years only a small part is flooded; some years, the entire valley. When we were there the river was rising, and none could tell when it would stop.

The women of the station told me of the terrible famine and pestilence which strike there periodically, though the famine is not now so great as formerly, because the railroad passes not far away and food can be moved. But in the old days it must have been horrible beyond description. The missionary in charge was made head of the famine relief, and he doled out small parcels of food to the patient suffering people. But the foreigners lived always in fear that the people would rise and storm the warehouses and so ultimately destroy themselves. The white women sat within locked doors, their own children beside them, while Chinese mothers with babies that were literally dying of starvation beat on the walls and cried for food. But they dared not open, knowing that if they once weakened all would be lost.

At Hwai Yuan also there is a home for the babies who are thrown out to die, and whom the missionaries rescue and bring up. We ourselves, while walking in the hills around the town, came upon such a girl baby, left on a pile of rocks to die, and brought her in to safety.

Yet who can tell? Perhaps in such an overpopulated country the Chinese attitude of "life cheap" is wiser. Life at best can hold little joy for the poor; perhaps they are better dead.

In this home for foundling children I came upon a baby boy, perhaps a year old, sitting stolidly in a high chair. His face



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was expressionless, and he sat the hours through as quietly as a bronze statue. He was blind and syphilitic. What could the future hold for him?

In a sudden burst of pity and horror I cried out to the gentle woman in charge: "You are cruel! You have no right to rescue such a child and condemn him to a life of misery. He would far better be put kindly to death. The white man is soft, soft! You do not know what you do."

In her gentle way this woman turned to me and answered: "Perhaps you are right. Will you kill him for us?" And I could only cry, "God help me, I cannot!"

There is also much loneliness among the whites, the missionaries and commercial people who live entirely alone, or two or ten together, in these overpopulated wilds of the interior. I shall never forget two young Americans, hardly more than boys, who lived on a Standard Oil houseboat somewhere on a dirty canal, with nothing, literally nothing, to do after work hours and never a home-side face to see. They were so pathetically eager to talk with women of their own race!

Once on a Yangtze River boat, coming down from Hankow, a young English boy of twenty-two or -three proved to be the only passenger except myself. He was a representative of the British-American Tobacco Company. At table he sat looking at me with great homesick eyes that thrust at me out of his British reserve, hardly daring to speak. But afterwards on deck, watching the broad brown river and the equally brown fields drifting past under the moon, I set him to talking. He had been for two years far up-country and had not seen a white woman in all that time. His English was positively rusty, and he fairly stammered at first with eagerness and embarrassment. He told me his whole life story in the first ten minutes, as the lonely British and American soldiers used to tell me their stories later during the war, and I felt as though I were look-

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ing into a prison of loneliness. There must have been hundreds of these chaps, perhaps thousands, scattered about from the sub-arctic to the tropics in China.

I was lonely too, all the time I was there, and I do not remember meeting anyone, white or Chinese, whose friendship has endured to this day, even though the country itself was one of the great events of my life.

Earlier I have stated that China ultimately got me, in spite of my unhappiness while I was there. So that I have watched from afar with immense sympathy the positively heroic accomplishments of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Government in organizing the country, in giving a stable government and a unified national spirit to the people. If it had been permitted to come to full flower, this newly awakened China would undoubtedly have had much to give to the rest of the world—as China has given so much in ages past.

On the way home, in Honolulu, we had an extraordinary experience. In order to explain it I must go back a little into family history.

About the time of the gold rush in California an uncle of my mother's left the family circle and went West, pushing on finally to the then Sandwich Islands. Nothing was heard from him directly, but anon word drifted back that he had married, or was living with, a native woman. The highly conservative family was scandalized. Later word was received that the marriage was legal, and that he had several sons. But there the trail ended so far as the family knew.

When we passed by Hawaii on the way out, mother remembered this vanished uncle, whose name was Stillman, and it occurred to her that some of the sons might be living and it would be interesting to see them. So she wrote a letter on a chance addressed to Charles Stillman, Honolulu, and said we

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would be passing through on such a steamer. When the boat landed we were all agog, waiting to see what our cast in the dark might have brought forth. It might, you see, have been anything.

We thought at first that nothing would come of it, for all the passengers had disembarked before anyone arrived. But just as we had abandoned hope, two men came breathlessly and asked for us. One was a very handsome young man whose native blood was so far diluted as to be almost imperceptible, and the other was an older, darker man. The first was Charles Stillman, who proved to be superintendent of schools for the island of Oahu, and the older man was named Oliver Stillman. They fell upon us with the greatest cordiality, saying, "This is Cousin Charles and this is Cousin Oliver." To which we of course replied, "This is Cousin Idea, Cousin Peggy, and Cousin Eunice." But we were also a trifle breathless.

They had a beautiful low-hung car waiting, and in it they swept us out on what proved to be a veritable triumphal tour of the island. We stopped at innumerable houses where we were greeted by more cousins; we were feasted and dined and hung with leis till we staggered. We were presented with all the tropical fruits in the place, with strings of native beads innumerable, and with calabashes and what not till the car was piled high with them. Altogether we met seventy cousins, and we liked all of them, with the single exception of an American girl who had married one of the men.

But the high spot of the day was the old lady—I had almost said the old queen—whom the original Stillman had married. For she was still alive, being then ninety-six, and she was the most regal human being I have ever seen, bar none, and one of the most beautiful. She had belonged, we discovered, to the old royal family of Hawaii, and it showed in every turn of her body. She had masses of snow-white hair piled high on her

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head, great liquid brown eyes and a lovely red-brown skin. Her straight tall body was encased in a black brocaded silk Mother Hubbard gown, cut with a very long train which trailed majestically after her. She spoke no English, but greeted us in her charmingly soft Polynesian speech. We were her subjects on the spot.

We learned later that when she was ninety the city of Honolulu had held a historical pageant, and she had led the pageant on horseback! And she was still, at ninety-six, quite obviously the queen of the tribe. If I had been a man I could have envied my great-uncle Stillman.

All the younger people had married whites, and the Hawaiian blood grew less and less pronounced as the generations passed before us. Personally, I thought the strain less beautiful as it was diluted. They were all delighted to see the first representatives of the original white family who had ever appeared; and five generations of women stood before us, laughing in a row, beginning with the old princess and ending with a little girl who seemed to be perfectly white. What an interesting ethnological study could have been made of that family!

I have never seen them since, but mother and Louise have been back several times; and they tell me that the old princess died at the age of one hundred and two, and that the others are quite as charming as they appeared on that triumphal day.

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### Chicago Again

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AFTER China I paused for a busy winter in Chicago before the next outland adventure. While still in China I had received a letter from Harriet Monroe telling me that Alice Corbin Henderson had been taken with tuberculosis and had moved to Santa Fe, leaving the position of associate editor of *Poetry* open. She was waiting for me to come home and fill it.

So I took a studio on Pearson Street with Janet, and repaired to the office. I was full of enthusiasm, and, it must be confessed, I felt very superior. One of the first happenings that met my eye was the second installment of the story of Harriet Monroe and the boorish young expatriate poet. She was making up the magazine for the following month, and to my surprise she was giving the coveted lead to a group of his poems.

"Well!" said I. "I see that you and So-and-so have made up while I was away."

Harriet looked up at me with genuine puzzlement in her eyes. "What do you mean?" she asked. "I never quarrelled with him."

"Perhaps not, but he certainly quarrelled with you," I countered.

"I don't remember it," said Harriet.

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So I got the insulting letter from the files and laid it before her. She read it over with a little rueful smile. Then she looked up and said with the air of one putting the baby to bed, "But, you know, one can't be really angry with the poets!" and she went back to her proof reading.

The last installment shall be told in its proper place.

I found also that she and Alice had been preparing the anthology called *The New Poetry*, which has since become such a standard work. Alice having fallen ill, most of the work fell on Harriet's shoulders; and the last details were being arranged when I arrived. Harriet asked me to look it over and see if I disagreed with anything. When I had read the manuscript I expostulated.

"You have left out Edna St. Vincent Millay!" I said. Millay had not then had a book published, and not many people knew her poetry; but I was already, as I am today, a great admirer of her work.

Harriet replied that she had seen a poem or two of hers, though the magazine had as yet published none of them, and she had thought them good, but that she was pressed for space and also for time. Where should she find these poems?

I answered that I would undertake to find them myself, and that if she had not space enough she could cut out some of my own poems which she was including and put in Millay instead. I was very hot about it. Harriet looked at me quizzically and sent me after the poems, which I succeeded in digging out of various periodicals. She included them of course when she saw them, and she did not cut my own space either. I felt that a catastrophe had been avoided. All these things mattered so tremendously to me in those days! I know now that neither Millay nor Harriet would have suffered appreciably by waiting till the next edition.

That winter Ralph Fletcher Seymour, who at the time was

## CHICAGO AGAIN

"publishing" *Poetry*, was good enough to bring out my first book, *Profiles from China*. Ralph is a real artist and, with Lynn Gratiot his assistant, he made a beautiful format, a finely balanced type-page and a simple dead-black cover which bore my Chinese name in red on a white sticker. I was walking on air, especially when the reviews began to come in, which were unexpectedly favorable. I had feared that it would be called a sort of glorified guide-book, or that the rather free "free verse" would be blasted. But apparently people liked it. Ralph printed only a thousand copies, and they sold out so completely that when he bethought him to get a copy for his own library they were all gone, and he had to buy one from a shop. As five New York publishers had previously refused it, we were both elated.

It was a busy winter. I worked hard at all sorts of hack-work, because the salary I got from *Poetry* didn't even pay the rent, and I played hard because I had been so long lonely in China. I played with the poets, and with Raymond Jonson, the painter and scenic designer for the Little Theatre, and Vera White his fiancée; and with Nancy Cox-McCormack the sculptor, and Grace Hickox, who had a school of dramatic expression; and with Llewellyn Jones, the literary critic of the *Chicago Evening Post* after Floyd Dell's day, a delightful Manxman with a brilliant and scholarly mind; with Harry Hansen of the *Daily News* and Fanny Butcher, later of the *Tribune*, Helen Dupee, and a host of others. By the end of February I was thoroughly tired out.

One afternoon there was a knock at my studio door, and to my great surprise there stood my mother. She was living in Detroit at the time. When I asked her what brought her to Chicago, she replied very simply that God had told her that I needed her. Although I was glad to see mother, I confess I was irritated. Why should God tell her that, when both Janet

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and I were perfectly all right? I was only tired. Mother was nonplussed and departed—I had no place to put her up.

But mother, and God, knew better than I did. The very next day I came down with pleurisy, an old enemy of mine, and was trundled off to the hospital. Mother took Janet with her to Detroit, and the day she arrived the child came down with measles! Now how do you account for that?

It was while I was in the hospital that one of my long-standing wishes was gratified and I at last saw the great bulk of Amy Lowell heaving into the tiny room where I lay.

That winter I had been arranging a series of lectures by the poets at the Chicago Little Theatre, a series sponsored by Maurice Browne. It was typical of Maurice, both his idealism and his lack of business sense in those days—though I believe he has learned since—that only if all the ninety-eight seats in the auditorium were filled, and people were massed in the tea-room next door, could he break even financially. And only for Amy Lowell did he break even.

Amy reached town a day or so before her lecture and sent word to me that she would visit me in the hospital. The nurses were much excited and fetched the biggest chair they had. When she came she brought me a great bunch of calla lilies, which I sometimes like against a fence in a garden but which seemed singularly inappropriate in a sick-room. I didn't know exactly what to say, and while I struggled for words she said complacently:

"Yes, I thought they were different."

That, I am afraid, was often enough the motive for Amy's acts.

But she was very generous, and we talked a long time. Yet all the while, such is the perverseness of my nature, I was waiting to find out why she came. Only towards the end did it appear that she wished to find out if my *Profiles*, then on



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the press, would interfere with her own forthcoming book of Japanese sketches. When she heard the details, she decided that they would not clash. "Yours," she said, "is the thing seen, and mine the thing imagined." Which was exact. Afterwards she wrote one of the most laudatory reviews of my book which I have ever seen of any book, thus proving that her generosity was as great as the rest of her.

When the time came for her lecture, my physician, Dr. Effie Lobdell, one of the most interesting women I know and one of my best friends, decided that I was well enough to go, and she herself took me in a taxi. The stage of the theatre, which was tiny, had been set with a formal arrangement of flats and curtains, and a chair placed for Miss Lowell, with a reading lamp beside it. But someone had miscalculated, and the space through which she was to enter was too small. She made an attempt to get in sidewise, but stuck. I was petrified, and the audience snickered. When the setting had been pushed apart Amy entered, wearing one of the most absurd little hats ever perpetrated, and sat her great bulk down in the chair. But at once she got up again and demanded that the chair and the lamp be moved. A nervous young man appeared and jiggered with them for a long time, only at last to satisfy Amy by putting them back within an inch of where they had at first stood. It was a difficult beginning, but such was the force of the woman that in a very few minutes all this was forgotten, and the reading was an immense success.

Amy was a strange person, of almost staggering vitality in spite of constant illness, and in her own way a great character—greater as a personality than as a poet in my opinion. She was the stuff of which legends are made, and already during her lifetime the legends had begun to gather. I remember that once, when Harriet was away somewhere and I was editing the magazine, a letter came to us from an American consul in

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some city in North Africa—Tunis or Algiers. He said that he had been out of the States for many years and had lost touch somewhat, but that as a consul he felt that he ought to uphold the honor of the country. Recently he had heard a story which had so upset him that, if it were true, he felt he could no longer represent the country honestly, and he would be obliged to give up his work. It concerned Amy Lowell, sister of the president of Harvard University, etc., and the version he had heard was as follows.

Miss Lowell was once lecturing before an audience in some eastern city, reading her own poems. She started to read a poem, but at a certain spot the audience tittered. She stopped, eyed them sternly, and waited for silence. When it came, she began again; but again they tittered in the same place. This time she stopped longer and looked at them even more sternly. Finally, when she reached the passage a third time and they once more tittered, she closed the book with a snap, said savagely but very precisely to them, "You unregenerate sons of bitches!" and walked off the platform.

"Is this true?" wailed the consul. "It is a matter of great importance to me, and I thought you might be able to help me."

I replied soothingly that we had never heard the story—which would certainly have run like wildfire through the poetry world if true—that I thought it unlikely that such a thing had ever happened, but that in any case Amy Lowell was as rare a phenomenon in this country as a polar bear would be in Tunis and that he could rest at ease so far as the United States was concerned. I hope the poor man was comforted. But it only goes to show how legends roll up about anyone as dynamic as Amy.

Once, several years later, I had a set-to with one of her famous black cigars. We had gone with her, after a lecture, to

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her room at a hotel, and she offered me a cigar—somewhat maliciously, I thought. I was not to be daunted, and accepted. Presently, when the weed was about half gone, I began to feel very strange. Cloyd Head says I was actually green about the gills. At all events Amy suddenly ordered food, and so reprieved me for the time being. I put the half-burned cigar out of sight behind my coffee cup and afterwards, though I was very much better, I lit a cigarette. Anyone else would have let me get by with it, but not Amy. She leaned around, looking for the evidence, and said gleefully, "Aha! You could not finish it!" And I could only acknowledge myself beaten.

Once, after she and I had had a literary tiff in one of the magazines—I no longer remember what it was about—the next time I saw her she came down a long roomful of people with outstretched hands, beaming cordially and booming out, "Here comes my best enemy!" There was no bearing malice against anyone as dynamic as Amy, no matter what she did; but I could never find her *simpatico*, and perhaps others felt as I did, because I was told that she longed for love but could seldom find it. May she rest in peace—if peace is what she wants.

But to return to that spring.

I was shipped off to North Carolina to recover my health, and when I returned I found a changed city. The Russian Revolution had just occurred, and it was apparent that the United States was at last to be drawn into the Great War. At once I made up my mind that I must go to France, and that the *Chicago Daily News* must send me.

My friend Henry Blackman Sell had in a measure prepared the way for me. Henry is an extraordinary person, one who lives on the near rim of the future instead, as most of us do, of living on the last rim of the past. He has also an almost psychic way of understanding the wellsprings of action. Some

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time during the fall he had asked me to lunch, and I had gone determined not to review the book I was sure he wanted me to review for his book page in the *News*. They paid nothing, the reviewer receiving only the book, and I was far too busy to work for nothing.

But when Henry came to the point, instead of asking of me the little task I should certainly have refused, he suddenly dumped the whole war in my lap.

"You have lived in France and Germany," he said, "as well as the Far East. You know the world [an ingratiating flattery indeed!], and I want you to review the war for me, the whole works! I have about twenty books already, and more are coming in every day. I'll give you a section each week, and you can take it up in any way you want."

Well, the magnitude of the thing won me. I accepted, and thereafter I attempted to digest the indigestible. But in the event it connected me with the war in the minds of Victor Lawson and Charles Dennis, the managing editor.

When I determined to go to France I was still not feeling quite well physically. I consulted Dr. Lobdell, and she said I should be well enough to go in the autumn. So I determined to strike for the position of correspondent. The *Daily News* has always had a very large foreign staff, which at the time was sending as much war news as the Associated Press. But they had no woman on this staff. I wanted to go at once and breast Mr. Dennis, but I felt I had not the necessary pounce to succeed. So I waited patiently for six whole weeks. Every day I would get up and ask myself, "Is it today?" And every day I had to answer, "Not today." It was a very wearing time, but I stuck it out till one day I could answer: "Yes, today I feel well enough. I can make it."

So I went to see Dennis. He was very courteous but not at

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all inclined to send me. Finally he said, as though it settled the matter, "We have never had a woman correspondent."

"No," said I, "but never before has the heart of every woman in the United States been in France."

I think it was that answer which clinched it. At all events the *News* decided to send me.

But some months were still to pass before I could leave, and during that time I had an experience of another kind. I had made the acquaintance of the French consul, Antonin Barthélemy, a charming and lovable elderly man who did much for the cause of France in Chicago during those stirring months. Presently Sarah Bernhardt was announced to play in Chicago at the Auditorium, giving a number of scenes from different plays in her repertory. She was then seventy-one years old, minus a leg, and not in good health. M. Barthélemy would have liked to arrange a large reception for her, but that was out of the question. So he arranged instead to have six women, each representing one of the arts, wait on her in her dressing room and pay her the respects of the artists of the city. Harriet Blackstone represented painting; Nancy Cox-McCormack, sculpture; three others, their differing fields; and I represented poetry. For the occasion I wrote her a laudatory poem which Ralph Fletcher Seymour handsomely illuminated on vellum and enclosed in a large envelope. This poem I was told to read aloud to her.

During an intermission we repaired to her dressing room with M. Barthélemy. When I saw her I had a terrible shock. From the auditorium I had felt a very considerable illusion of youth, though I knew her actual age. Perhaps the many times I had seen her when she was younger had carried over. At all events I was not prepared for what I saw when I met her face to face. She looked incredibly old, as old as Time it-

self. From the young costume of Portia which she wore—she had been playing the courtroom scene—her player's face looked out like that of a wizened monkey. She was of course heavily made up, and her lips were so shrunken with age that they seemed to draw back from her teeth, and she had been obliged to put a heavy layer of lip rouge on her upper gums.

The consul introduced us to her and we chatted for a few minutes. Then an extraordinary thing happened. I realized suddenly that in spite of her body she was not old at all, that she was in fact the youngest woman in the room. It was we who were old and stiff and inhibited. She was the spirit of youth itself, the essential thing, no mere accident of time. For youth is a spirit which some youngsters never have, and which only the great can keep.

Presently M. Barthélemy indicated that I must read her my poem. I stood in front of her, feeling very awkward and inept, opened the large envelope and took out the poem. I was supremely conscious of how her own "golden voice" would have sounded reading it, which did not add to my comfort. Also I knew that she could not understand English and would therefore make nothing of it. But I did my best. I got through the first stanza fairly well—there were only two—and then I made a great mistake. I was standing almost at her knees and I looked down into her face.

She was looking at me intently, with very bright eyes, and her player's mask succeeded in expressing a dozen different thoughts at the same instant. Predominantly she was amused at this young woman from "*la ville des porcs*" who was so evidently embarrassed in her presence, and who dared to read aloud to the divine Sarah. She was also inclined to be sympathetic towards me. She couldn't understand a word of what I was saying, she was trying to size me up, and she thought that

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I was not doing so badly for a little provincial. They are extraordinary, these American women!

All this and more I saw in her eyes, and it very nearly floored me. I could feel myself tremble suddenly, and the vellum rattled in my hands. But I got through somehow without looking at her again. Then I tried awkwardly to fold the sheet and put it back into the envelope to present to her. She was smiling with open friendliness now, and I said in French, "I fear, madame, that you could not understand what I have been trying to say." Suddenly she reached out, and with a lovely Gallic gesture she took poem and envelope from my fumbling hands and held them against her heart.

"*Mais, mademoiselle,*" she said, "*la poésie, cela se comprend avec le cœur!*"

Could anything have been more perfect?

Well—at last the autumn came. Mother took Janet and went to live with an aunt of mine in Burlington, Iowa. My brother Larry went to France with an engineering corps, and my sister Peg went with a base hospital. Louise of course remained in China.

So I sailed on the French Line at the same time that the Rainbow Division, one of the first volunteer divisions, sailed in transports. That was in October, 1917.

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### War Correspondent

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ARRIVED in Paris, I reported at once to the *Daily News* office on the corner of the Place de l'Opéra and met my chief, Paul Scott Mowrer. In this quiet, unassuming, and physically unimpressive man I soon discovered a great spirit. He was as unlike the typical hard-boiled newspaperman as can be imagined. He had then lived so long in Paris that in some ways he seemed quite unlike an American. And he had the heart of a poet, having published a volume or two of verse.

The office was hardly like a newspaper office either, taking color as it did from him, though he was much absent at the front, being attached to the French G.Q.G. It was quiet and smooth and friendly. Correspondents came and went, the business was done, but without flurry and without the undertone of hard-boiled cynicism one learns to expect in such a place. Occasionally there was discontent, as was inevitable, but far less than one would expect at a time when everyone's nerves were on edge.

I remember that once when our aviation man, Paul Rockwell, whose love for Mowrer fell just short of idolatry, was irritated by something, he burst out suddenly: "Hang it, he isn't a newspaperman at all! He just isn't!" Then his face cleared and broke into a charming affectionate smile, and he



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ended, "And that's the reason he's the best newspaperman there is!" The Pulitzer Prize people thought him good too, some years later. He is now back in Chicago and has Charles Dennis' old position as managing editor of the *News*. And, surprisingly, he is now as American as anyone in the country, though he has kept his French charm.

During the year I was with the paper it was Mowrer who sustained me. He treated me like a father, though he was younger than I. He helped me quietly over the attacks of horror which overcame me from time to time; and he did it very simply, by letting me see how much deeper the pain was in himself, who had already been three years in the inferno, and yet managed to keep his head steady and his heart in place. He had a little pained smile which ran up one side of his face, and which gave me the greatest sense of the pain of the spirit of anything I saw in France.

There were seven correspondents attached to the Paris office at that time, including Mowrer and myself. The men did the heavy work, reporting the military, political, naval, and aviation events. My own work was mostly human interest stories. I wrote of the American soldiers on leave and in hospital, the French civilian population, refugees and children, color stories about war-time Paris, and so on. I never was really good at the strictly women's stories I was supposed to write. In particular there was one story about what became of all the socks knitted by the women at home which I was told in Chicago to write, but which I never could bring myself to do. Confronted with the immensity of the war, and with no newspaper training behind me, I simply could not find these things important. Mowrer understood this perfectly and never pressed me. Indeed he left me almost entirely to find my own stories, only suggesting something occasionally.

For the most part I was in Paris, though from time to time

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I went on trips to the little towns behind the lines, in what was loosely called "the front." These trips lasted from a few days to several weeks, and were arranged for me by Mowrer with infinite red tape through the various military channels. I was sometimes with the French army, sometimes with the American, and once through a fluke for a couple of weeks with the British. The British did not encourage women behind their lines. Only once did I get to the front-line trenches, near enough to the enemy to see the German soldiers with a telescope—they usually stopped me at the light artillery line—but I had plenty of exciting adventures.

The trips to the front were my especial solace. I saw terrible things there, fear and agony and death and heartrending grief. But it was all clean and simple. The morale of the troops was true as steel, and even the civilians immediately behind the lines were full of a deep and deadly courage. It was in Paris that all the froth and dregs of civilization were to be found, all the self-seeking, backbiting, mercenary people with their petty little intrigues and their struggle for personal advantage. In Paris I often had the feeling of wading through filth.

Not long after I arrived, the *Daily News* set a fund afoot to buy toys for Christmas for the children of the "reconquered districts." This was the region which had been conquered by the Germans in the first attack in 1914, and which had remained in enemy possession for three years. As it had been twice fought over, most of this country was pretty thoroughly devastated. During the summer of 1917 much of the territory had been reconquered. Some of it was under the French and some under the British. The distribution of toys was put into my hands. When I went to the British authorities to apply for permission to give these toys to the French children behind their lines, I was politely but firmly refused. I could never understand just why. But the French authorities were



AFTER A DISTRIBUTION OF TOYS IN THE "RECONQUERED DISTRICTS", OF FRANCE.

The American at E. T.'s left is Harry Lackman, the photographer.



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delighted by the gesture of American friendliness and smoothed the path for me in every way. There was plenty to do as it was. I had toys and sweetmeats in all for ten thousand children!

The toys were all bought at wholesale houses in Paris—there was no time to get them from America—and the chocolate and sweetmeats also. They were sent up by the kindness of the American Red Cross and distributed mostly through the local French *œuvres*, or relief stations. My headquarters were in Noyon at the American Red Cross station. Henry Copley Greene was in charge there, a delightful man, Bostonian to the core—he used from time to time to write for the *Atlantic Monthly*—human and humorous and patient. He helped me in every way, and his big warehouse was cluttered for weeks with disgorging boxes of toys. Owing to the disorganized condition of the country, the distribution could not all take place at Christmas, but was spread through the holidays—though this did not matter much in any event because French children receive their presents at the New Year instead of at Christmas.

It was a moving experience, the one real pleasure of the war to me. The children of the town soon came to know my errand, and they nicknamed me *Le Père Noël* and used to follow me on the street in whooping troops.

But to me the high spot of the whole event was attained after New Year's Day had come and gone. Every child in the district had been reached by that time through the *œuvres* or the churches, except in about six small villages, so isolated and so destroyed that they could not be reached through any organization. So Mr. Greene and I piled the little open Ford car of the Red Cross high with unwrapped toys till it looked like a picture of Santa's sled itself, and set off across the snow-covered devastated countryside. It was a beautiful clear day;

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the sun sparkled on the snow, and the cold turned our noses as red as the good saint's own.

The villages were no more than shells of hamlets, a mass of broken houses and rubble to which a few hardy survivors had returned. Where a single wall had survived they built a lean-to against it in which to exist; and where none could be found they put up a shed with a corrugated iron roof. In the largest village we found twelve children, and in the smallest, three. We would drive up on the execrable road and give a view-halloo. Some child would appear, and we would send him or her to collect all the other children. I do not remember seeing a grown-up anywhere. When they had all gathered we would give out the toys without ceremony.

These youngsters were peasant children, inarticulate and undemonstrative. If they had held any hope that *La Nouvelle Année* would bring them gifts, it had been abandoned. New Year's had passed. They expected nothing, hoped for nothing but to survive. And here were we with our brash American optimism! They took the gifts almost in silence, only their eyes showing what they felt. They thanked us with curtsies, and went away across the snow, hugging their new possessions. It was both so joyous and so heartbreaking that my eyes stung with tears continually.

When we reached the next to the last village—I no longer remember its name—four children appeared. Among them was a little girl about five years old with a round face like those of peasant children in drawings. She wore a dark red knitted cap from which hung, framing her face, a number of red worsted balls. Something about her struck me deeply. She reminded me of my own little girl who had died at about that age. I thrust into her hands a large doll with big brown eyes and a pink silk dress. I believe that she had never seen a doll.

She must have been about two years old when the Germans came over and the village was destroyed, and where would she have seen a doll after that?

She took it and held it up in front of her, gazing at it with great round eyes which were devoid of any expression at all. She simply looked, for so long that I was beginning to wonder what was the matter—when suddenly I saw the realization dawn in her eyes that this unbelievable miracle was really hers. She forgot instantly everything else in the world and began to jump up and down, up and down, still holding the doll before her and crying, in her baby lisp:

*"O, que c'est jolie! O, que c'est jolie!"*

The little red balls on her cap danced with her.

Mr. Greene and I went on to the next village, and in half an hour or so we returned over the same road. All the other children had long since disappeared, but the little girl in the red cap still stood beside the road in the snow gazing at the doll and still murmuring, *"O, que c'est jolie!"* She never even saw us as we passed.

There is no need, indeed there would be no value, in setting down here the major events of that final year of the war as we felt them day by day, nor in trying to put into words the feeling we all carried with us that something inside us which is usually solid had turned liquid with suffering, the feeling which has been so well described in the ancient saying, "my bowels have turned to water." Underneath, we lived in pain and loneliness and terror, but outwardly we took refuge in the casual surface of life which was so elaborately built up during the war, in our work, in the endless joshes which became current, in the little bickerings and jockeyings which we could not avoid, in the madhouse of detail. It is all so far away now—and yet so close. Instead of attempting to set down

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these major things I shall tell here only a few incidents and pictures which were perhaps typical of the life of a woman correspondent.

In early March I had moved from my hotel to a little studio in the Latin Quarter, a one-story affair with a roof almost entirely of glass. I still have a piece of shrapnel from our own anti-aircraft guns which came through the roof one night during an air-raid. And as it seemed foolhardy to remain in so exposed a place I used to take refuge, when the sirens blew, in the basement of the apartment house next door. They blew often on good nights that summer. From this refuge we could hear only dimly the heavy explosions when a bomb struck, or the lighter cracks of our own guns answering them, and the rotary hum of the enemy planes was quite inaudible. We were not in any danger there.

But the scene was so colorful that I should like to describe it for its own sake. The basement itself was extraordinary, for it consisted of the wine vaults and food cellars of a medieval monastery; and the masonry, though dripping with age and moisture, was still so solid that the new apartment building had been built above it. It contained a series of heavy barrel-shaped vaults, perhaps twice as high as a man in the center, alternating with small square rooms not unlike cells. The typical Parisian concierge was always there before us, bringing with her long lengths of *rat de cave*, that thin wax taper which is used in the catacombs. She cut off lengths of this and thrust them into the masonry at intervals, where their unsteady light picked up the damp vaults, accentuated the darkness, and lit vaguely the motley crowd of us forgathered there night by night.

All the inhabitants of the neighboring studios were there, all the Latin Quarter types whom Murger loved, each wrapped in heavy coats or shawls or, just as often, pieces of bright tap-



estry or brocade. For it was cold in the vaults. There was the sculptor from Nantes who occupied the studio next to mine, with his extraordinarily pretty mistress-model who always sat cuddled up against him, so that the two made a group. There was the middle-aged painter, solid in frame, who invariably wore his large black velvet *béret* and velvet coat. There was a gay young man, quite the gayest among us, who had locomotor ataxia and walked with difficulty using two canes, which sprouted at the end into five rubber-tipped prongs. He used to slide laughing down the banisters to the vaults every night, and propel himself slowly among us, exclaiming invariably that Edgar Po-é (in whom I did not at first recognize our own Edgar Allan Poe) would have loved the place. And there was so strange a figure that I never quite believed him possible, though I saw him frequently. He was a pale and aesthetic negro from one of the French colonies, also a painter. And I mean literally that he was pale and aesthetic. He had a finely shaped long head, with close-cropped smooth black hair, and an immovable air of remote and withdrawn melancholy on his carven face. He came wrapped in a huge piece of dull brown tapestry shot with gold, and he never spoke to any of us. Instead he always sat in a certain corner, quite oblivious to the guns, reading by the flickering light of the *rat de cave* a de luxe edition of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*! There was even the pretty model with the racking cough, who complained between whiles of the dampness, and the inevitable little white dog who yapped at us. And I was haunted by the feeling that there was also among us, in the semidarkness, the ghost of a long-dead monk, telling his rosary or mumbling in medieval Latin of the shortness of human life. It would have made the perfect setting for a story—only nothing ever happened there.

War-time Paris had also its humorous incidents. One morning two young American officers—second lieutenants, they were,

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very green and spruce—came dashing up the steps to the *News* office to tell us that they needed help, and needed it badly. I assure you that they were cold sober! Here is their story. They had come in on leave the night before, on a train from the south, and on this train had asked a fellow traveller for the name of a hotel. This they had copied on a paper and given to a taxi driver. But this hotel proved to be full, and the driver had then taken them to another in the same block where they had put up for the night. In the morning, having occasion to go to Lloyd's Bank on the Place de l'Opéra, they had got into another taxi and driven there, dismissing the vehicle. They had also thrown away the paper of the night before, and forgotten the name on it. But, worst of all, having emerged from Lloyd's they found that neither of them had the remotest idea of the name of their hotel, nor the street it was on! They had then raised despairing eyes and seen the sign, "The Chicago Daily News," which looked like home to them. So here they were, and would we please find their hotel for them!

"Our dunnage bags are in the room," they wailed, "and we had four hundred dollars in them!"

The case looked hopeless to me; but Miss Murphy, the blue-eyed and temperamental young Irishwoman who was Mowrer's secretary and who presided over the office, sprang into the breach with a glint in her eye worthy of Sherlock Holmes himself. She set about questioning them. Had they no vaguest idea, no sound memory at all, of the name of the hotel? One of them twisted and said he thought it was something like "Hôtel des Nuits," but the register of Paris hotels showed no such name, and as the words mean "Hotel of the nights" it seemed probable that what he remembered was the last words of some sign or other. How long had they ridden in the taxicab? About fifteen minutes. Did they remember anything they had passed on the way? Nothing—they had been talking. Did

they remember anything of the drive the night before? Nothing. Was there anything of any kind which might help that they did remember? Nothing.

They sat there like disconsolate babies, and Miss Murphy bit her pencil. Then she started again. On the fifteen minutes' drive to Lloyd's, had they twisted through many streets or gone fairly straight? Here, unexpectedly, they had noticed that they had turned only one corner, from a small street on to a large one which led them directly to the Place de l'Opéra. Well, that was something. Miss Murphy got the big map of Paris and made a circle on it. The hotel must be just off one of the several big boulevards that radiate from the Place about so far. Her pencil stopped at a certain street. "All we know," she said sagely, "is that there are two hotels in the same block. And I know that on this street there are a number of small hotels." She dived again into the register. "There is a hotel on this street named the Hôtel du Nil," she said. "Can it be that?" One said, "Naw!" but the other wavered. But even Miss Murphy had reached the end of detecting, and she told them dryly that she could do no more and they must go to the police. Oh, no, no, not the police! Their superior officers . . . So finally, since there was no other guess on earth, they went off disconsolately to look it up.

The next morning they bounced up the stairs again, full of ginger. That had been the hotel all right, and now would she please tell them where they could get tattooed? Fact.

One day also two American congressmen blew in, on some investigation or other, and asked me to recommend to them "a book on the war." Having reviewed a year's output of these on various phases of the conflict, I was a bit dashed. "What sort of book do you want? On the military end, or the economic end, or the political phase, or the naval side, or aviation, or human interest—on England's part, or France's, or

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Italy's, or Russia's, or the Near Eastern end—or what?" Oh, nothing particular like that, just a book on the war. And as I stood trying to collect myself, one of them added, "You know, this European war!" I finally recommended that they read Empey's *Over the Top*. . . .

It was in war-time Paris too that I tackled the most peculiar dish of my career. I have always had a penchant for strange foods, and I have eaten with equanimity buried eggs, shark's fins, bird's nest soup, fish bladders and boiled clover in China, lily bulbs, lotus seeds, and seaweed in Japan, octopus and strange crustaceans in the South Seas, snails, horse meat, even camel meat. But never have I met anything like the *civet de renard*, the fox stew, that I found in a Paris restaurant one night that winter. We had, you see, several meatless days a week at that time, and the restaurants did what they could to supply the lack. The government, for a very good reason, had put no prohibition on foxes. The stew was in a heavy brown gravy, and it tasted exactly, but exactly! as a fox's den smells. It was the only thing I couldn't swallow.

There were other incidents, even at the front, which were more picturesque than terrible. One time I went with three other American women on a tour behind the American lines. It was just after the Château-Thierry salient had been bitten off, and the line was at Fismes or thereabouts. After we had motored around during the day, looking through Belleau Woods, where the burials were still going on, and watching major operations in a field hospital, Mrs. Thompson Seton, who was with us, persuaded the young lieutenant who had charge of us to let us spend the night at the front. It was strictly against the rules, of course, but we did it. We gathered up a blanket apiece from somewhere, stole up to the top of a little hill, and lay down on the ground in the darkness. It was a warm summer night, with a moon nearly at the full. Below

us in the little valley stretched the front-line trenches. It was a quiet sector just then; but even so the green-yellow Very flares went up continually, as lovely to look at as fireworks, and indistinct sounds came to us all night from the trenches. Far away we could hear an occasional gun, dull and desultory-sounding. I slept little.

As the dawn came up, we saw that we were lying in a spot which had been abandoned by the Germans only a few days before. The usual *débris* of steel helmets, cigarette tins, Bibles, and trash was lying around. As Mrs. Thompson Seton and I lay on our backs looking up at the sky, we saw a flock of crows come flying and circle above our small hill.

"Look!" she said. "They have come to see if they can breakfast on us. I will move now. Watch!" And she made a wide gesture and sat up. I followed suit. At once the crows lost interest and circled off in raucous dignity for more fertile pastures.

Then the gas-attack signal sounded in the trenches below. We had no masks, so we scurried away.

But I must pick out something to show the life of the little towns behind the lines where I spent much time, and it might as well be Beauvais. Beauvais is a pretty little town in a fold of the hills, with a cathedral and one of those curious ancient clocks from which little figures issue at the hour, to move jerkily in and out of runways and opening doors, as its chief sight-seeing attractions. I know because I took so many wounded and sick American boys to see them. It was never actually fought over, though it was pretty badly smashed by air-raids. But at the time of the Cantigny attack, soon after Foch had stopped the German advance and we had started to reattack, it was the center of much activity. I spent some weeks there at that time.

The enemy was raiding the town very savagely on clear

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nights, and during the period of the full moon all the civilian population—for the civilians had not been evacuated—used to go to the hills for protection. I went with them once or twice. The hills thereabouts are honeycombed with great chalk pits, huge white vaults and galleries that held several thousand people without crowding. At nightfall a huge procession of women, old men, and children carrying bedclothes and mattresses would trek out to these pits, spread their bedding on the rock, and try to sleep. We lay in rows under the hill, one beside another, all mixed up together, with an occasional sprinkling of poilus on rest billets who came for the fun of the thing. There was much joshing and kidding, and not too much sleep. But it was all very orderly, and on the whole rather a lark—until we went down into the town in the morning and saw how many houses lay in piles of rubble.

On one such morning we saw that the attack had been peculiarly savage and nearly a quarter of the town had been destroyed. Several bombs also had fallen on hospital premises and a nurse had been killed as she bent with a cup of soup over a wounded boy. It happened that all the American correspondents were there at the time, and they made a lurid story of atrocity, saying that the hospitals had been bombed on purpose. But I went over the ground also, and I could not agree with them. The town was small and at that time housed no fewer than nine hospitals scattered through it. It would have been extraordinary indeed if none of them had been struck in a promiscuous attack. Since the bombing of helpless civilians is not now counted as an atrocity, I am of the opinion that no atrocity had been committed, but I dare say it may go down in history as such.

The American Red Cross had taken over a French building of some sort and had fitted it up as a hospital to care for the wounded of the Cantigny attack. As usual the preparations were

hasty and inadequate. There were only two or three nurses, and they were totally unable to take care of the situation. One of them, Maude Cleveland, had been trained, I believe, only as a nurse's aid; yet she had charge of two big wards of seriously wounded boys for seventy-two hours hand running during the worst of the rush, and the others had about the same. I helped her through one night, holding bowls and feeding soup and washing faces—I knew nothing of nursing—but by the next noon I had caved and went back to my room to sleep. When I awoke at four o'clock I found a request that I ride to Paris at once on an ambulance which was to carry a nurse who had been stricken with double pneumonia, and who was being sent to the American Hospital at Neuilly. We were to bring back anesthetics immediately, because the supply had failed.

They gave me a Red Cross nurse's veil, and I sat up with the driver, a hearty good-natured and slightly hunchbacked American. Although the reason for my going was that the sick nurse might have a woman with her, I was of no service to her, I regret to say. Periodically I would alight, open the door at the back, and ask her if there was anything I could do for her; but I was always met with such a stream of savage profanity and a request to "get the hell out of here!" that I could only retreat, feeling my inadequacy keenly. Poor girl, I could hardly blame her, and I was delighted to hear later that she recovered.

We reached Paris without other incident by eleven o'clock, grabbed something to eat, and started back at once with the anesthetics. As we started out the sirens began to blow, heralding the first of four air-raids we were to strike that night, each in a different town. We rode out the din of the raid and presently were bowling along the country roads in the moonlight. In an hour or so we came to a village and drew up at the central square. It was quiet and peaceful here under the

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moon, in the old-world square with its pretty houses, but I wondered why we had stopped. The driver had just explained to me that he always became confused here and was trying to remember the right road out of town, when without warning a large bomb dropped on a house not more than seventy-five feet from where we were. The house itself seemed to explode and then fell inwards with a decrescendo of falling masonry. I felt the ambulance leap forward like a live terrified creature, and we sped away, hearing other bombs drop behind us.

It was curious about air-raids. In Paris I always felt them as a huge impersonal danger, like a hurricane or a thunderstorm. I might be killed, but it would be accidental. But in these little towns, where the houses were never more than two stories high and the whole scale was so diminished, I invariably felt as though the cropped young aviators in the sky were trying to kill me personally. This was no exception, and I think my ambulance driver felt the same way. At all events, when I could catch my breath again I asked him if the still leaping car was on the right road and he answered, "You bet it is! When the bomb dropped I went over everything I had ever known, like a drowning man, and I remembered the road perfectly!"

Somewhere about two or three o'clock we stopped again, this time beside the dark bulk of a château. "Come on," said my Jehu, "I know somebody here who will give us a cup of coffee, and we need it." The château was then being used as a hospital. Presently the door was opened by a tired-looking woman, and we followed her into a vast baronial hall filled with great suits of medieval armor which stood stiffly along the walls and in awkward poses in the middle of the hall. They were very silent and eerie, lit only by the moon and one flickering candle. We tiptoed silently past these relics of earlier wars—how much less deadly!—and came at last into a small



pantry where there were a table and chairs. There the woman very kindly gave us bread and coffee. As we sat drinking it, the air-raid signal came to our ears. The tired woman hurried away to help with the patients, but the young hunchback and I only looked at each other, and without a word went on with our coffee. Nor did this raid come very near us, and presently the din died away in the distance.

The fourth raid we discovered going on at Beauvais when we drew in just before dawn. We only caught the end of that one, but it had been pretty terrible, to judge by the things we saw when the grey light came up a few moments later. But I shall not tell here any of these things, nor the other horrors I saw. What useful purpose can it serve now?

In those days, before the airplanes were guided by radio beacons, we were only in danger of a raid on clear nights; but as the moon was still large, we expected another the following night. By this time I was pretty well worn out, as was everybody else. That evening the entire civilian population fled from the town. Many went by train or vehicle till the danger should be over, and those that remained took to the hills for the night. There wasn't a civilian left by eleven o'clock. Everyone had abandoned the little hotel where I ate my meals—though I had a room across the street—even the Swiss headwaiter, who stayed longer than the others. At ten o'clock Maude Cleveland came in, at last off duty after her seventy-two hours. I have never seen a human being more weary than she was. The waiter fed her something, and she dragged herself off to bed.

Then the waiter left too, and the hotel was empty of everyone but James Hopper and myself. The other correspondents had gone off somewhere, but Hopper, who I think was a "special correspondent" as I was, had remained. Hopper was lots of fun and absolutely bilingual, the one American I have met

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who made my own spoken French seem inadequate. But then I understand that his mother was French. We sat waiting together, too tired and nervously exhausted even to sleep, and keeping our spirits up with white wine, all we could discover in the kitchen. At that we held up pretty well.

The night wore on. All sorts of officers came drifting in and out, looking for nourishment or drink or companionship. There were French and American officers among them, and we made them welcome. At first we said the hotel people had gone, and there was nothing to eat or drink. But presently it seemed a pity that these tired men should go empty; and we went out and made a thorough search of the premises. We found bread and cheese and an inexhaustible supply of *vin ordinaire*. The better wines were locked up. These we were presently handing out with a lavish hand. What if they were not ours to give? What, after all, is property when one is not at all sure of being alive in the morning, especially when the owner deserts it? I learned in that evening to understand the psychology behind many depredations.

Sometime later a group of British officers dropped in. We did not see many of them in this sector. These had been stationed on the Chemin des Dames, and they told us the first we knew of the break there. The Germans had attacked them, and they had been totally routed by the savage onslaught. At least, so the officers said. They were so shaken that their hands trembled as though they had the palsy, and they kept repeating again and again that it was all over, that nobody could stand against the Germans, and that they had lost their duffle bags! We gave them wine and bread and cheese, and the sick feeling in the pit of our stomachs deepened. Finally they went off too, to the British headquarters somewhere near Amiens to report.

By this time the moon, which was past the full, had risen

and the air-raid warning sounded. Hopper disappeared somewhere—I have never seen him since—and I went across the street to the basement shelter of the house where I roomed, another wine cellar. Two American officers, both slightly intoxicated, insisted on accompanying me, though I tried to shake them. One was much worse than the other and kept trying to embrace me in the most disgusting manner in the little basement room while the planes flew overhead. I appealed to the other, and he came to my rescue and subdued his companion, who presently went to sleep, huddled on a bench. I stayed a while longer and then decided, raid or no raid, that I must sleep. So I went to my room amid the din and slept like a dead person till morning.

I have told the disparate and incoherent events of those few days just as they happened, so as to give a picture of the incoherence and apparent irrationality of our life then.

Of course there were many times, especially in Paris, when life was ordinary and rational enough. I even had certain moments of social life. Dr. Clara M. Davis, an American woman doctor, one of the grandest people I know, used to be in town now and again, sometimes with members of her unit, and we went round together. She operated in the country somewhere just behind the lines, taking care of civilians, though occasionally the military pressed her into service. I crossed on the boat with the unit, which was her own, and she and I became great friends. She can tell some good war stories when she chooses, especially about the inner workings of the Red Cross! My brother Larry and also my violoncellist sister Peggy appeared once or twice. Arthur Davison Ficke, the poet, was stationed in Paris in the ordnance department, and we saw each other occasionally. I knew Orville Peets, the etcher, and Forbes Watson and Lewis Gannett, and Laurence Barretto, the novelist, whom I met in a hospital in Beauvais, and a number

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of correspondents. But I had no heart for anything approaching an intellectual life. *Poetry* used to come regularly, and I remember one day poking its green cover with my finger and thinking, "Is it possible that I was ever interested in that insipid sheet?" It was the only time in my life that my affection for the art entirely deserted me.

At last, in October, 1918, when it was fully apparent that the war would end soon, and when the *Daily News* was so crowded with cable news that they had no space for my own articles—which were usually mailed—Mowrer received a cable from the home office telling him to return me to America. I have always been glad for the honor of the sex that they recalled one of the men before me! After that the force was gradually cut down to the normal number for Paris.

But I didn't want to go home yet. Although we all knew that the end was very near, I wanted to see it. So I deposited my steamer money in the bank and signed up with the Red Cross, where I became secretary to Captain Taylor of the medical research department, and spent my time editing the final departmental report. In January I sailed for home.

But while I was with the Red Cross, a few weeks before the armistice, I had one last experience of the war of so macabre a nature that it deserves a chapter to itself.

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## 11

### I Ride with a Corpse

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I HAVE never told this story in public before, and seldom in private. Even now it will be difficult for me, I know. But no account of my adventures could possibly be complete without it, so I shall make the attempt.

Before I left the *Daily News* I had made application to the French authorities for another trip to the front. The permission had not yet arrived when I left the *News*, but soon after I had joined the Red Cross the necessary papers came through. I was anxious to go and asked permission of Captain Taylor and Dr. Alexander Lambert, who was head of my department. They very kindly gave it, so I went.

The party consisted of a French lieutenant who was in charge; Mademoiselle de la Vallette, a young woman of fine but impoverished family who had been designated by the *Affaires Etrangères* to conduct foreign women on these expeditions; Cecil Dorrian, correspondent of the *Newark Evening News*, Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, the well known writer; and the wife of an American officer who had no right to be in France at all or to go with us but was in it for the ride, and who shall therefore be nameless. This last, who was a friend of Miss Sergeant's, had replaced the Russian woman correspondent who was originally designated to go with us. Of these

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I knew only Mademoiselle de la Vallette, with whom I had been on several expeditions before. We had shared the same bed and had struck up quite a friendship. I did not then know her mother, who was a charming elderly noblewoman, the Countess de la Vallette, but I did know other members of her family.

We started out by train, presently changed to two motor staff-cars and proceeded in the general direction of Rheims, where we were to see among other things the damaged cathedral. But we never got there, nor have I ever seen Rheims.

About the middle of the afternoon we stopped on the Mont de Bligny and got out of the cars to go over the battlefield there. The engagement had been an important one, savagely disputed, and the French had been assisted during the battle by Italian troops, so that the débris from three armies was still scattered about. The French lieutenant, before we started across the desolate field, cautioned us most severely against touching anything, anything at all. The retreating armies frequently left traps for the conquerors, and there were naturally many unexploded shells and hand grenades left.

We deployed over the field, spreading out as we did so in the way people will who have no special reason to stay together. I was walking with Mademoiselle de la Vallette. The lieutenant's orders made us very careful as to where we put our feet on the uneven ground, but unfortunately we did not take them literally enough. I know I picked up, and have to this day, a New Testament in German dropped by some poor lad. I could not imagine that it was a trap, and I was correct. Mademoiselle de la Vallette, however, was less cautious. Presently she picked up something which neither of us recognized. It was a wooden stick with a cylindrical metal head from which hung a number of strings of white tape. I found out later that it was commonly called a "potato masher," and that

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the strings were placed there in order that pursuers might step on them and explode the hand grenade. But at the time I had no idea what it was.

*"Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?"* Mademoiselle asked me.

*"Je n'ai pas d'idée,"* I answered.

So she turned away from me and went over to ask the lieutenant, who was walking alone at a little distance. At the same moment Cecil Dorrian, whom I had never met before that day, but whom I liked on sight, called to me to come and look at the view, thereby saving my life. For I turned away and walked in another direction.

Afterwards I learned that Mademoiselle went to the lieutenant and asked him the same question she had asked me. He replied, terror-stricken, "Put it down, mademoiselle, put it down quickly!" She leaned down to do so, but in some fashion she must have pulled one of the strings, or set it down too roughly in her confusion, for it exploded, killing her instantly, tearing off an arm of the lieutenant, and wounding Elizabeth Sergeant in the legs.

As for me, I was by this time standing some paces away, my back to them, looking out over the wide and desolate view, and my thoughts were far away. Suddenly there was a sharp explosion, and Miss Dorrian and I wheeled about. We were scarcely farther off than Miss Sergeant but the explosion had gone the other way.

When I turned I saw my friend's body, which had been leaning forward, straighten up from the waist and fall over on her back. The long Red Cross nurse's veil she wore had been blown so far away or into such little bits that, though we searched later, we could not find any trace of it. Her long hair was standing straight up from her head, her body from the waist up was quite naked. Her right hand was missing. She had been, as the French say, completely *éventrée*, and for

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some seconds after she fell all her entrails boiled up through the broken abdominal walls like some hideous fountain. The lieutenant began to scream, a high piercing scream of agony like a woman's. Elizabeth Sergeant made no sound, only sank slowly to the ground, her eyes, which caught mine, curiously unveiled in the way in which eyes become in the face of death.

As for me, the shock was so great that for a moment the universe seemed to stand still. Afterwards, when I could analyze the sensation, it seemed to me as though time itself, which is usually elastic and can be pushed one way or the other, had suddenly solidified into steel. For weeks I felt that the instant of the explosion was the only real thing in the world.

Presently, when we could think again, Cecil Dorrian stayed with the wounded and I ran for help to the poilus who had come with us and who were now waiting, perhaps three city blocks away, by the side of the road. They had not heard the explosion, but when I called to them five or six started off at a run. I turned back and tried to keep up with them, but could not. I was badly out of breath and horribly shaken. When I got back near the place of the explosion, I met the poilus leading away the still hysterical lieutenant and half carrying Elizabeth Sergeant. A number of pieces of shrapnel had punctured her lower legs and feet. She stopped and asked me whether her face, which was also peppered, would be permanently disfigured, and I assured her it would not. I did not realize at the time that she was as seriously wounded as she was, for she made no sort of fuss, but spoke as calmly as ever. But she spent the next two years in hospital.

Mademoiselle's body lay as it had fallen, and Cecil Dorrian, the officer's wife, and I looked at it with horrified eyes. Then the officer's wife made a pretty but thoughtless gesture, took off her coat and threw it over the body. In a moment or two she was shivering violently in the cold wind and would cer-



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tainly have taken pneumonia had not Cecil Dorrian, who was wearing a trench coat with a detachable lining, given this lining to her.

As soon as we had got ourselves together a little we went back to the road, where I asked the poilus to take me to Elizabeth Sergeant, who had already been carried away and who perhaps needed a woman with her. But they refused. She had been taken up behind the lines to a first-aid station and no civilian was allowed up there without special permission. I tried to persuade them, but they were adamant. One of them said rather sternly, "The wounded are more interesting than the dead, madame." This is true of course, a truly professional angle. But I was not enough of a professional to have thought of it immediately, when the dead was a good friend and the wounded a casual acquaintance. I have always been sorry, however, that I stopped to look at Mademoiselle and so let Miss Sergeant go off without a woman to accompany her, especially as she seemed very bitter about it later, when I found her in a hospital in Paris.

One of the motor cars having gone off with the wounded, we were obliged to await its return. It was gone nearly two hours. During this time Cecil Dorrian and I walked up and down the road. Dusk was coming on, and a cold wind was blowing. The sky was full of scudding clouds. We talked. From that time on I loved Cecil Dorrian, though I almost never see her and do not now know whether she is alive or dead.

During this time also I obliged the poilus to take up the body of Mademoiselle de la Vallette and carry it to the roadside. They were very unwilling to do this, saying that it must be *constaté sur place* before it could be moved. This is a French regulation operative also in peace time, a very sensible one, though like all French rules it is sometimes carried to ab-

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surd lengths, so that it prevents seriously injured people from being helped. It requires that no body shall be moved till a properly authorized officer shall certify as to the cause of death. I enquired when such an officer might come to such a desolate uninhabited place, and they replied that one might come around tomorrow. But I was unable to endure the idea of the poor girl lying there alone in such a condition overnight. If it had been a soldier at the front I should have taken it quite as a matter of course; but she was a woman and a civilian, and the lines were many miles away. I could not see what could be gained by it, and I knew her family in Paris would suffer greatly at the thought. So I forced the poilus to obey me. I was dressed in a correspondent's uniform, exactly like an officer's and with a Sam Browne belt, and I suppose they could not resist my assumption of authority. Besides, it was not really their business.

When the second car returned, they put the body in one car and we three women got in the other. We drove to the next village, where there was a French military office. Here we stopped and went in to the officer in command. I took charge of the talking. I presented our papers, which were of course in perfect order, told of the accident and asked him to take charge of the body and see that it had a decent burial. The officer asked at once:

"Has the body been *constaté sur place*?"

"What is that, monsieur?" I asked, though of course I knew. He explained. I said that nothing of the kind had been done, but begged him to receive the body none the less. He hesitated for what seemed a long time. Then he said suavely that it was not really his business, since the accident had not happened in his post, and that we would better take the body to the next village, which was better equipped. I found out afterwards from the driver of the car that he was afraid of getting into

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trouble about regulations, and that, besides, such a body would be a nuisance to bury. So he had passed the buck.

We drove on to the next village where exactly the same process was repeated. In all we stopped at five posts, and none of them would receive the body. There began to be something ghastly about it.

By this time I had conceived an audacious project, though I did not tell either of the two women about it. This was no less than to take the body back to Paris with me, so that it might be given proper burial by the relatives. I knew how much store the French set by such observances, and her people were gentlefolk. Moreover, what could be gained by burying the body here in the militarized zone, from which it could only be taken months, perhaps even years, after the war was over?

But it was really an audacious project. The regulations were terribly strict in the military zones, and I laid myself open to imprisonment and court-martial, a fact of which I was fully aware.

The sixth village to which we came was Château-Thierry. There was a railhead here by this time, and we were expected to take the train for Paris. The driver was sure the authorities would be obliged to accept the body here. But when we called at the bureau the officer in charge was as unwilling as the others to take the responsibility. He hemmed and hawed and mentioned the Americans, who also had a military post here. I jumped at the chance. I thought I could explain to the Americans. So I told Cecil Dorrian and the other woman that the Americans would surely fix things up for me and take the body, and they would better go to Paris by the train which would leave in a few minutes. I could come on the next morning. If I had told Miss Dorrian the truth she would not have left me, and she had a mother in poor health who would have

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been greatly troubled if she had not returned. She agreed reluctantly, and they left.

I then dismissed one staff car, climbed into the front seat of the car which carried the body, and drove to the Americans. It was by now eleven o'clock at night. I found a captain, an intelligent man, in charge and I told him the whole story, showed him my papers, and made a clean breast of what I intended to do, if he would permit me, or at least not hinder me. As an officer he knew very well that it should not be done, but as a man he saw no harm in it. I could tell that by his face.

He said very gently that, since Mademoiselle was a French citizen—although I was to be sure an American—he did not see that the body concerned him. I agreed. He suggested, however, that we go together to the French authorities and talk to them again. We went. I was very tired by this time, and to cheer me he quoted a popular saying in the army which I had never happened to hear before, "It's a great life if you don't weaken." I thought, and still think, that it has far more depth to it than most catch phrases.

Arrived at the French bureau again, I accomplished a small miracle of indirection and vagueness. I told the officer that the Americans did not feel it their problem; but I did not press him to take the body, which he was still reluctant to accept, and I finally left without saying what I did plan to do. How he afterwards managed to explain to his irate superior officers I cannot imagine.

In the meanwhile I had persuaded the *poilu* who drove the car to make a run for Paris with the body. This was difficult to accomplish. He was a *bon père de famille* whose wife and family were fortunately in Paris, where he had not seen them for seven months. That helped. Also I promised him money which I found in Mademoiselle's pocketbook, which was for-

tunately uninjured. But he was terribly afraid of being court-martialed, and he hung back a long while. He said, among other things, that there was nobody to sign his papers for him. He had a little book in which orders must be written, and he could not of course hide the fact that he had been to Paris. Whereupon I became very stern and said that of course I would.

"But you have no authority," he objected.

"Listen, monsieur," I answered. "When the head of a military party is killed or wounded, the next in authority becomes head, does he not?"

"Certainly, madame."

"Very well then. Your orders were to accompany this party till released. In the absence of the lieutenant in charge, and of everyone else but you and me, I have succeeded to the head of the party. I am a regular correspondent—you see my uniform—and though it is, I admit, somewhat irregular, I am now the only one who *can* sign your papers. Moreover I order you to go!" This final sophistry bemused the good fellow. I signed his papers and he agreed.

But to return to the American captain. When we got back to his office, he looked me straight in the face and said solemnly:

"Miss Tietjens, if I had been officially notified that there was a body involved in this matter, I could not of course allow you to return to Paris with it. But I have only your word for it, which is in no way official. If I myself were driving to Paris in a hurry, I would start at one o'clock tonight. That would bring me through Meaux a little before dawn, when there would be the least likelihood of being detained by the last military post there, and it would bring me to Paris soon after daybreak. You are an American and obviously tired and hungry. As such I offer you coffee and whatever else we can

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find to eat, and I suggest that you lie down for a while in the nurses' quarters in the next building."

"Thank you very much, captain," said I, just as solemnly. "And may I park my-car—outside?"

"You may park the car," said he. Thank God for that captain!

So that was settled. I ate something and lay down for an hour. In some ways this was the most trying hour of the whole night. I could not sleep, and the image of Mademoiselle's mutilated body kept floating before my eyes till I could stand it no longer. I arose, called the chauffeur and we set out for Paris.

It was a chill autumn night with a wind, and a cold rain was soon falling. This was an advantage to us, but uncomfortable. We pulled down all the curtains in the back of the car and I sat up with the chauffeur. I could not face sitting inside, in spite of the discomfort, and I was soon soaked to the skin in the open seat. We did not talk much. The poilu was as well aware as I of the danger of our situation, and that if we were caught with an unauthorized corpse in these little towns we should certainly be jailed at the least.

The journey lasted for hours and was more like a waking nightmare than anything I have ever done, before or since. A perverse little imp somewhere in my tired mind persisted in telling me that there was something funny about it. I thought continually, by some freak of association, of Stevenson's *The Wrong Box*, in which the story is supposed to be hilariously funny and turns on the efforts of two men to dispose of a corpse, honestly come by. When I read it I thought it in bad taste, but now I began to see that in its own macabre fashion it really had elements of humor.

The height of this feeling came in Meaux, which we reached not long before dawn. Meaux was our most serious hazard.

## I RIDE WITH A CORPSE

Not a soul was stirring as we rocketed through the silent streets, though once we saw a light and heard someone come out of a basement behind us, probably the sentry who had taken refuge from the rain. We did not stop to see. But Meaux is a confusing town at night, and the driver was excited and anxious to avoid the highway. He lost his way, and for what seemed to us many hours—though it could hardly have been more than a half-hour at most—we wandered around in it, coming out from time to time on the fortifications at the edge of town, turning around and trying another street. Finally we saw a promising sign and the poilu got down, lit a match behind his hand and looked at it. It said *Débit de Tabac*. Somehow the tobacco was too much for our jangled nerves and we both burst into somewhat hysterical laughter.

Soon afterwards we found the way out and streaked for Paris. The driver was afraid of the *octroi* at the edge of town, the place where they search every car coming into town for food, on which there is a tax. We reached there about dawn. But when the attendant saw the military staff car with two people in uniform, he waved us on. We had made it at last, though our troubles were far from over! But at least I felt that no matter what they might do to us, they would not send the body back to the war zone.

The person I wanted to get hold of was a French officer, Capitaine Meslon who was attached to the French G.Q.G., to which Mowrer was also attached. He was usually away at the front, but I happened to know that he was in town. He was a cousin of Mademoiselle de la Vallette and could take charge from now on. But I did not know where he lived. So I went to Mowrer's.

We arrived there at about seven in the morning. I left the poilu below stairs to make sure that nobody looked in the car, and went up. Mrs. Mowrer opened the door and it was typi-

## THE WORLD AT MY SHOULDER

cal of her that when she saw me—I must have been a sight!—she asked not a single question, only said, “Come in and have a drink!” I never needed anything worse. I found Mowrer in bed with the flu, which was then raging. He seemed startled, as well he might, but gave me the address I wanted and said he would stand by me in whatever followed.

We then went to the captain’s house, where I found him and his sister, who also had the flu, and told them the sorrowful news. They were inexpressibly shocked, and we wept together. I also made the captain promise to protect the driver and to see that nothing was done to him for his kindness of heart. He promised, and he was as good as his word. He sent me home to get some breakfast and dry clothes, but warned me that I must be at the *Val de Grâce*, the big gloomy hospital where such things were attended to, by ten o’clock. It was then a little after eight. At last I could leave the body, for the captain took charge of it!

When I had freshened up I went to the hospital and met the captain. We were ushered into a big circular room where the colonel in command, a big man with a black spade beard and piercing eyes, wearing the uniform of a medical officer, greeted us courteously and asked the captain questions. I said nothing. The colonel was very solicitous, said it was a most regrettable accident and doubtless the first of many—in which he was right—and got out a form on which he took down the particulars. Name of deceased, address, and so on. Then he asked:

“And where did the accident take place?”

“Now it’s coming!” said I to myself, and I saw the captain square his shoulders. But he answered quietly, “On the Mont de Bligny.”

Then the storm broke. “The Mont de Bligny! But *bon Dieu*, the Mont de Bligny is in the war zone!” Yes, it was.





E. T. AS WAR CORRESPONDENT, PARIS, 1918

(Photo by Orville Peets, the etcher)



## I RIDE WITH A CORPSE

Then how in the name of a thousand thunders had the body come here? It was impossible! Something was decidedly wrong. I could not have got through the lines with the body. They could not have persons wandering in with corpses and such a story! He would arrest me at once! And more of the same sort.

The colonel became furiously excited, and all his aides with him. He waved his arms and shouted till the roof shook. Under ordinary circumstances I should have been terrified, but I had been through so much that a little more or less didn't seem to matter. Mademoiselle would be properly buried in any event. The captain tried to explain, to quiet him, but he got nowhere.

So I gathered myself together and took a hand. I explained to him just what had happened, giving him the names of the towns where the body had been refused, and asking him to investigate for himself. An aide wrote down the names and took my papers. The colonel seemed somewhat confused, but still insisted that I could not have got through to Paris.

"Someone would certainly have stopped you!" he cried.

"Nobody stopped me!" I assured him, which was the gospel truth.

He was still unconvinced, so I made a last effort and put on an attack of hysterics, which I very nearly felt by this time. I cried to him in profound agitation that I was an American and knew nothing of his French red tape, that I could not see my friend's body lie unattended on a cold field, and that I had injured nothing and nobody except his infernal *papera*se. I was very vehement and showed unmistakable signs that I was about to go into a real emotional storm.

This confused him still further, and Capitaine Meslon came to my rescue with soothing words. He said he knew me, that I was an accredited correspondent in good standing, and that he would himself be responsible for my later appearance

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should they want me. So finally I was let go, though the colonel still glared balefully at me as I went.

They buried Mademoiselle with honors a day or two later, and her family were profoundly grateful to me for having procured them this last melancholy pleasure. Some years later she was posthumously awarded the *croix de guerre* for death in the course of duty.

Mowrer must have fixed it up with the *Affaires Etrangères*, the department of the government to which I was accredited and of which Mademoiselle had been an employee, for I heard no more about being arrested. Indeed the head of the department sent for me and gave me a formal letter of thanks, which I still have somewhere, thanking me for having brought back the body of their dear colleague for burial with her family. But I could see that he was none too pleased with me nevertheless for taking such liberties, and he kept repeating,

"Madame, it is fantastic, what you have done! It is fantastic!"

I dare say he was right.

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## 12

### Domesticity

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TOWARDS the end of January I sailed for home on the French Line. The war was over, and I was tired. I went down to Bordeaux with a Red Cross party which included a large number of people. Never have I seen a group so psychologically confused and uprooted, and this was true not only of the Red Cross party but of the whole boatload of us. Almost everyone felt that he had been miscast in his activities, almost nobody knew how to begin civilian life again. Every one of us was fit for the psychoanalysts.

I met casually in the Red Cross party two tall unusual-looking girls, twins, named Cromwell. I was not thinking of the art of writing, and it did not occur to me that one of them was the young and very talented poet Gladys Cromwell, some of whose poems we had published in *Poetry*. They seemed even more upset than the rest of us, and several times during the formalities of embarking, the party had to wait while someone went to look for them.

When we reached the mouth of the Gironde, where it joins the Bay of Biscay, the boat stopped for a long while in mid-career. It was only the next morning, however, that I learned that we had stopped because the Cromwell girls had committed suicide. I talked to the American doughboy who had

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seen them go. He said that he had been on the lower deck—the Red Cross sent its people second class—which was deserted by all but the two girls and himself, as it was dinner time. The two were talking together by the rail. Presently they withdrew a little from it and then, to his horror, he saw one of them break into a run, flip over the rail and leap into the water. The doughboy shouted and ran towards the spot. But the second was too quick for him and went over after her sister. The first, who must have been the poet, went over without a sound, but the second screamed as she jumped, and screamed again as she drifted past in the water. By the time the soldier could get the French to understand and stop the ship, it was too late to save them. It was several days before the bodies were recovered. I believe that every one of us on that boat might have done the same.

The business of turning ourselves around psychologically and facing towards our old life again was difficult enough in all conscience, but so much has been written on the subject that it need hardly be mentioned here. I accomplished a good part of my own rehabilitation in Burlington, Iowa, whither mother had gone with little Janet. We lived in a house belonging to an aunt of mine, on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi. There I tried to get my old interests back by collecting my miscellaneous poems into a volume which was later published under the title *Body and Raiment* by Alfred A. Knopf, who also bought the rights to my first book *Profiles from China*. I am a little proud of the fact that after twenty years these two volumes are still in print.

But at the time it was terribly hard work for me. Whenever I type any considerable body of my poems I become hideously depressed. They are always so far below what I had hoped for them that they come to seem to me the most awful stuff that has ever been penned. And this time was peculiarly difficult. I

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crawled around looking gloomier and gloomier, till finally mother asked what the matter was. I told her I was the worst poet God had ever made. She forbade me sternly to touch the manuscript again for a week, and thereby saved my sanity. At the end of that time I was able to finish it.

I also went on tour, talking for the government on the Liberty Bond issue.

When spring came I took Janet, who was then twelve years old, with a lovely little sleek head and the crystal-clear eyes of childhood, and we went alone to live on the dunes of Indiana, miles from the nearest human being. It was beautiful there, so beautiful that gradually the pain oozed out of me and I could look at life again. And the solitude was delicious. From Sunday night to Friday night we never saw a human being. Janet took two pieces of white cloth, about the size of handkerchiefs, and tied them with a string around her waist, one before and one behind. She called this her "jungle costume," and it was all she ever wore during the week. I was busy writing a novel, and I would glance out of the window of the shack a hundred times a morning, to see her little brown body sporting in the lake or playing at some game of her own. I still think Janet the most satisfactory human being I have ever known.

One week day, however, surprisingly, as we were going out with our knapsacks to fetch a supply of food, we met a pair of clear blue eyes, a mop of yellow hair, and a generally engaging personality whose name turned out to be Chester Hart. He was a student at the University of Chicago, off for a few days, and he and his shack-mates soon became good friends of ours. Janet took one look at the boy and was never afterwards the same . . .

As for my novel, later called by the publisher *Jake*, it had nothing to do with the war; but none the less I wrote down,

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and thereby to a large extent purged myself of it, all the sense of human pain and futility that the war had roused in me. It was a gloomy tale, and though it got good enough reviews as a "poet's novel," few cared for the thing. I don't blame them!

Over the week-ends friends in quantity used to come down to the dunes, and we had grand parties around the beach-fires. I loved it all, and by autumn I was myself again.

That autumn I worked on *Compton's Pictured Encyclopaedia* for children, and I became engaged to Cloyd Head. He was then part of the firm of the Year Book Publishers, a mail-order house publishing medical books for physicians, which his father had operated for many years. He took another flyer at the theatre though that fall and wrote and directed a very beautiful *Nativity Pageant* for the Chicago Art Institute.

This pageant was my first experience of any consequence behind the scenes, and I learned a lot—enough to last me for a long time. It is an odd fact that, although I myself am only very moderately interested in the theatre, I should have married two men who were connected with it. First I had the professional theatre in New York from the outside with Paul Tietjens, then the art theatre movement from the inside with Cloyd Head. Well, it has certainly added variety to life!

Hermann Rosse, a dynamic Dutchman who was then professor of design at the Institute, had the idea for the pageant and designed the sets for it. They were executed by the students. Eric De Lamarter, assistant director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, composed the music and played it with part of the orchestra. If they had had time to complete this production properly it would have been one of the most beautiful imaginable. Hermann Rosse's designs were marvellously beautiful and varied, Cloyd Head's dramatic version of the



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great story full of mystery and poetry, and De Lamarter's music among the best he has written.

But it was all done much too fast. Twenty-nine days from the time Rosse suggested the pageant to Cloyd he had written the script, it had been produced, and the curtain went up. At six o'clock on the evening of the first night Hermann and his band of students were still painting scenery at the Institute, and Eric, a wet towel around his head, was finishing his orchestration in a hotel room! Only Cloyd's actors were trained and letter-perfect. The situation was a mild forecast for us of what would happen later, in New York, with our *Arabesque*. I remember especially that Donald Robertson played the prologuist high priest and that Cloyd's sister Helen who, under the name of Helen Fivey, had been one of the leading players in Maurice Browne's Little Theatre, lent her beautiful and moving voice to the Angel Michael. But it all went on somehow, as theatrical things always do, in spite of several accidents, and much of its beauty did succeed in showing through. They repeated it the next year.

This winter ushered in another long period of domesticity for me. It has always seemed to me that my life—any modern woman's life—is like going somewhere in a sailboat. A man's life has an engine, it is single-hearted, it can up-anchor and go directly towards its goal, and most of its troubles come from outside itself. But in her very essence a woman has to tack and veer. She has too many calls inside herself, too many things essential to her, and there is a non-escapable division between her family life and her work. She has to go one way for months, perhaps years, in order to satisfy one side of her, and at the end of that time she has to turn about and go in another direction. And it is hard to remember in the turning and tacking just where the goal lies for which she is bound.

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That is the chief reason, I think, why relatively few women fulfil themselves completely.

So now I chose marriage. Cloyd Head and I were married soon after we recovered from the *Nativity Pageant*, and for some years—five perhaps—we lived in Chicago. Two children were born to us: Marshall, who is now even taller than his father, and a little doll-girl with beautiful white hands who was born too early and lived only thirty-six hours in an incubator, so that I never saw her alive.

It was while I was in labor the second time that I made the most inept remark of my career, a remark that still sends me into gales of laughter when I think of it, though something strange always happens to Cloyd Head's face when it is spoken of, something not solely amusement. I don't remember it, so I give here his account of the event.

Dr. Effie Lobdell was attending me, and she had given me twilight sleep. (Quite without my knowledge by the way. I prefer to face things with my will.) As I lay in labor, she asked Cloyd if he would like to speak to me, and led him into the delivery room. He says my face was ghastly beyond belief to the eyes of affection, purple around the eyes, tinged with green, and infinitely remote. He must have looked shocked, for Effie said casually: "That is only the mask. She's quite all right. I will speak to her." And she said to me, "Look who has come to see you!"

Then, says Cloyd, I gathered myself together, drew the ghastly mask into a polite smile, and said in my best drawing-room manner, "It seems to me that I have met you somewhere before!" A curiously perceptive remark, considering that I had then been married to him for four years and was in labor with his second child! But Cloyd says that if I had been dead I could not have seemed half so remote from him.

These five years have telescoped themselves in my memory

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into a single stretch of calm happiness. I have determined in this book to give as little as possible of the more personal side of my life, to put no emphasis on the string which binds my adventures together. But I cannot forbear saying here that after nearly twenty years of married life I still find Cloyd Head the most interesting person I know. I would still rather lunch with him than with any other human being. What happened at the end of my first marriage, the final residue of all the emotional stew that attended it, was that I was bored, bored to extinction, bored till my very legs ached with it. And boredom is the end I dread most for any friendship. But Cloyd Head and I can start a conversational hare any evening and sit till midnight over the uncleared dinner table, discussing till our tongues are weary on their pivots. To me it is the great blessing.

But even in these years some things stand out in my memory. One was Janet's choice of a profession. The child was then about fourteen years old and rather serious in her quiet way, though she always had a sunny disposition. One day I asked her, "Janet, do you know what you want to be when you grow up?" She answered me gravely: "Mother, that is a thing to which I have given a great deal of thought. I have decided to be a paleontologist." Well—I stifled my amusement, and my amazement, and agreed that it would be a fine thing to do. So now we had an embryonic scientist among us!

A year or two later, seeing that nothing in her life reinforced this dynamic decision, I hatched a plan. I proposed that we two should write together an alphabet about the prehistoric beasts that interested her so much. It was to be composed of jingles for children, as gay as we could make them, but what information they contained should be absolutely accurate. It proved to be a good idea. Through it Janet learned how to consult various authorities in the libraries and the museum

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—we were months collecting the data—and how to put through a thing started. I supplied some of the energy but she did most of the work. We called the result *The Jaw-Breaker's Alphabet of Prehistoric Animals*, and one of the jingles runs:

D is for Diplodocus,  
The biggest creature ever.  
You never saw so odd a cuss,  
No, never!

For eighty feet and two it was,  
More stupid than the chickens;  
And if he stepped on you it was  
The dickens!

When the manuscript was finished, we happened to be in New York during the summer and I sent her with it to the Museum of Natural History to have it checked. She went off very seriously, her sleek hair shining, and came back to report that the director of vertebrate paleontology had seen her personally and had passed it all. Everybody always loved Janet and I could imagine what a godsend she must have been in the museum, so a few days later I went myself to find out. It was just as I supposed. I made my way into the department and found a very charming woman whom I asked whether she had seen a little girl with a manuscript. Her face lit up instantly. "Oh, are you Janet's mother?" "Yes," said I. "Here!" she cried suddenly, waving her arm about the room, "Come over here, fellows! Here's Janet's mother." They all crowded about me and we had a good affectionate laugh. The alphabet was published in *St. Nicholas* and afterwards in book form, with some of the most delightful illustrations I have seen, by Hermann Post, a German illustrator. It made a beautiful book, but Albert and Charles Boni, who published it, felt

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obliged to charge \$3.50 for it, which is too much for a children's book. Even so it sold pretty well, and Janet was very proud.

She stuck to her determination in the main, too, though a few years later she came to me and said she would rather be an archaeologist than a paleontologist, "because man is more interesting than animals." Afterwards she went for two summers with Dr. Edgar Hewett's expedition from the Museum of Santa Fe and the University of Albuquerque, excavating prehistoric Indian pueblos and cliff-dwellings.

Another thing that I remember with pleasure was an opportunity which we had of being of assistance to the great modern painter, Albert Bloch. In the first international show, which revolutionized American painting, there had been some of his canvases, and we had both been very much interested in him. We had also seen a German monograph on his work and were much impressed. It happened one spring that Cloyd went on business to the annual meeting of the American Medical Association which met that year in St. Louis, and I accompanied him. From my former connection with the town I had friends there, among them Dr. Gustave Lippmann and his wife Alice, interesting and cultivated, though slightly eccentric people. In their house were several large canvases by Albert Bloch in a style new to us, a sort of agonized cartoon style. I have never seen paintings anywhere which gave me such a feeling of mental anguish and torment. There was one of the Christ in particular, sitting with his disciples, which showed with devastating effect the terrible loneliness of the Master surrounded by the primitive types who were his followers, and the hopelessness he must have felt in trying to deal through such raw material. Many people were shocked at it, but I found it extraordinarily gripping.

To our surprise the Lippmanns said Bloch was in St. Louis,

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where he was born, I believe, and might perhaps be induced to come and meet us. Mrs. Lippmann warned me, however, that he was in a most unhappy mental state and difficult to get at. He did in fact come over one evening for a few minutes, leaving almost at once. But before he left he asked us to come to his studio, an invitation which we accepted gladly. When the time came, however, Cloyd was detained on business and I went alone.

Bloch met me and took me to the top of an office building where a portion of the loft had been partitioned off into studios. There he showed me his paintings. And still more he showed me himself. It was the old story of a sensitive artist lost in a town which could not understand him, among people who thought him crazy. The man was as close to the edge of a nervous breakdown as one can be and still go on.

But all this penetrated to me by degrees. What struck me at first was the tremendous difficulty of talking with him. He was as prickly as any porcupine. Everything I said struck him wrong, and he said so in no uncertain terms. It seemed to me that he was deliberately attacking me as a hopeless *bourgeoise*. Also I thought some of the canvases he was then doing were so bitter as to be over the edge of sanity—though I said nothing of this. Soon I was floundering hopelessly and feeling lost as a swimmer in a great storm. All I could do, I felt, was to retreat, and I finally did so. Bloch opened the door to the studio and I stood on the top step of the narrow loft stairs, saying good-bye. And then, quite suddenly, his reserve broke down.

"I am going mad!" he cried abruptly. "I cannot endure it here, I cannot! I must, *I must* get away from here, and you must help me. Help me to get to Chicago, to any place at all away from here!" With more in the same vein.

I was thunderstruck, but rallied as best I might. The human

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need was too great to be resisted. I could no more have gone away and done nothing than I could have sailed by a man marooned on a desert island without trying to help. And I thought then as I do now that he was a great artist. So I comforted him as well as I could and promised to try.

But how? What could I do, I who was not a painter and knew so little of the ropes, who moreover had no money myself? All the way home to Chicago I went round and round the problem, and by the time I had arrived I had a tentative plan. I went first to Arthur and Mary Aldis, old friends to whom we were deeply devoted. Mr. Aldis was a trustee of the Chicago Art Institute and was much interested in modern painting. Mary Aldis is a playwright and poet—of recent years she is also a painter herself. They already owned a canvas of Bloch's. I told them of the dilemma, and they volunteered to buy a painting from him, the exact one to be chosen later, and pay him at once enough to cover his removal from St. Louis and keep him for a while. Hi Simons, who had not then married Cloyd's sister Helen, volunteered to share his apartment with Bloch, whose work he greatly admired. There remained, however, a job. Bloch had said he would be willing to teach, but I knew the Art Institute would not employ anyone so revolutionary in its academic halls. The only other chance I knew of was Carl Werntz's Academy of Fine Arts. I did not know Mr. Werntz, but I went to see him and told him that the great Bloch was in St. Louis and did not like it, and that he might perhaps be persuaded to come to Chicago. Through the Aldises I arranged to take Werntz to see the famous Eddy collection of moderns, which he had never seen, and which contained several of Albert's canvases. It worked. Werntz agreed to try him as a teacher. The position was not much for one of Bloch's caliber, but it would serve for the time being. Then I telegraphed Albert.

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It was now June or July, and Mary Aldis, who had played Lady Bountiful to many Chicago artists, had given us her delightful little Playhouse, on the lawn of their estate in Lake Forest, for the summer. We invited Bloch to spend two weeks with us there to get himself together before going to town. He left his family in St. Louis and came, tremendously excited but still shot nervously. For two weeks he slept long hours, or sat about in the sun with us, and at the end of the time we could see that, given half a chance, he was a charming companion, witty and amusing and lovable. Then he went off to town.

There are many people in this world whom it is no real use to help when they fall into a hole because, once you have struggled to set them on their feet again, they are down as soon as you let go of them. But even those most capable of walking by themselves will occasionally fall into the pit and need a hand up. I have been in such a condition myself more than once. Albert Bloch proved to be a fine person to help. He made very good with Werntz, and later went from there to the University of Kansas at Lawrence, where he has remained ever since as professor of art.

Another major event which happened to us then was the Moscow Art Theatre, which came to Chicago for three weeks. If a thunderbolt had fallen from heaven we could not have been more amazed or overpowered, although Cloyd's old friend Oliver Sayler had been trying for years to make us realize what they were. But such performances cannot be conveyed in words. They must be seen. We were moved to the core of our beings by all the plays, but especially by Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*. It was almost too poignant to be endured. We met the company, especially Stanislavsky, and liked them all.

During these years I did not altogether forget poetry, though I wrote little. There was a very interesting new crop of poets



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coming up, centered for the most part in the University of Chicago Poetry Club. This is a group of young people who meet together to read anonymously and to criticize one another's work. It is the finest kind of training, and at least in those days the meetings were always stimulating. I dare say they still are. I would sometimes take poems of my own and throw them into the maelstrom, and I never failed to receive some criticism which was of value to me.

Many of these youngsters have since become justly celebrated. The president of the club was George Dillon, who has now succeeded Harriet Monroe as editor of *Poetry*, an extraordinarily beautiful, sensitive, and talented young man, really just what the popular idea of a young lyric poet should be. George was very young then and full of enthusiasms, and everybody liked him. When he had completed the manuscript of his first book, *Boy in the Wind*, which I found marvellously beautiful though perhaps a shade too intellectual, I tried to sell it to Alfred Knopf. But even the best publishers trip up sometimes, and I received in response to the strongest letter I knew how to write a most unsatisfactory answer saying that this was not what was wanted just then! He regretted it later when the book had been published by someone else and sold out many editions, and when Dillon's next book, *The Flowering Stone*, took the Pulitzer prize. But by that time it was a lost opportunity.

Another member was Maurice Lesemann. His fame is not yet as great as it will be, because he has been extraordinarily slow in publishing a collected volume of his poems, but anyone who wants to become acquainted with one of the most interesting coming figures in American poetry should watch for Lesemann. His poems have a depth of feeling and a wealth of exact observation, combined with a very personal and moving music, which affect me deeply.

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There was also Glenway Wescott, still in the stage where he wore extraordinary clothes and carried for effect an old-fashioned carpetbag of bright red Brussels carpet, adorned with huge magenta roses. He was an exotic figure, but he soon left us for Paris, and novels. Elizabeth Madox Roberts, although she was older than the others, was also a member and used to come occasionally. She was very charming and very modest. I remember that one evening she brought a moving group of poems about children which struck me greatly. After the meeting she asked me if I thought anyone would publish them. "Certainly," said I. "I would suggest the *Atlantic Monthly*." Miss Roberts seemed terrified at the very thought of so much effrontery on her part; but I insisted, and she finally sent them. They were accepted, her first great success. I am proud to have had even so little to do with the recognition of so fine an artist.

Then there was Jessica Nelson North, whose poetry pleased me greatly for its human quality and its maturity. For a time she was associate editor of *Poetry*, but later left us in order to write novels. After Harriet Monroe's death she returned to her old position on the magazine. And there was Berta Ten Eyck James, another talented girl with a very special music of her own, who has worked on the magazine now and again. She is now Mrs. Daniel Catton Rich, wife of the art critic and associate curator of paintings and sculpture at the Chicago Art Institute. Cloyd Head and I are especially fond of the two of them. And there were Janet Lewis and Gladys Campbell and Pearl Andelson and Sterling North, Jessica North's brother, later book editor of the *Chicago Daily News* and author of several novels, and a number of others.

The members of such a club change rather rapidly as the students come and go. One of its more recent presidents has been Elder Olson, a slender blond youth of Scandinavian ex-

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traction, who has a finely sensitive lyric gift and a shimmering word imagery which should carry him far.

Two other young poets made their appearance about the same time, not connected with the club at the university, but members of the *Poetry* family. They are Marion Strobel (Mrs. James Herbert Mitchell), and Morton Dauwen Zabel. Both have been associate editors of the magazine—and both have been valuable additions. For a while after Harriet's death Morton acted as editor, but soon left to carry on his work as head of the English Department of Loyola University. And before leaving the magazine, I should like to mention our indispensable business manager, Geraldine Udell.

It was also during those years, if I remember right, that we became really acquainted with Lew Sarett, who teaches at Northwestern University and very occasionally gets to Chicago. He is a thoroughly satisfactory person, an individual. One feels in him the presence of a rounded whole, of soul, body, and mind equally developed and at peace with one another. His athletic outdoor body, accustomed to the wilds during half the year, his fine intuitions and sensitive humanity, his quiet humor, and his penetrating remarks are a revelation, after so many one-sided people. He has managed to make himself a home, only a couple of hundred feet from one of the most travelled roads north of Chicago, surrounded by woods and gardens, which has the quality of existing by itself, a small entity which contains in miniature all the elements of Sarett's personality. Here he lives with his charming wife and children, as far from the city as the tranquil beauty of nature is far from it. His students at the University are fortunate in being in contact with such a man.

In addition to the Chicago poets we came to know a number of others during this time. One summer my mother, who was living in New York, borrowed our young son, then two years

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old, and Cloyd Head and I made an unforgettable stay at the MacDowell colony at Peterboro, New Hampshire. This colony is, or was when we were there, a masterpiece of understanding. Certainly in it Mrs. MacDowell has done an incalculable amount of good for the fine arts of America. The atmosphere of the place is so perfectly adapted to the spiritual as well as the physical needs of the creative artist that he blossoms in it as plants blossom in sun and rain.

In one of the rustic studios, lost in the blue-green woods, we passed as happy days of fruitful labor as we have ever passed. After work hours we had the companionship of people of our own kind. And always we had the great beauty of the northern woods.

In another of the studios not far from us Edwin Arlington Robinson lorded it in his modest way, a sort of uncrowned king of the colony. He alone was permitted to return year after year, and nobody that I ever heard of resented this—except Maxwell Bodenheim. But then Maxwell seemed to resent life itself and everything concerned with it. Robinson was so quiet that it was extremely difficult to talk with him at first. All the smaller phases of life which are grist for ordinary conversation seemed hopelessly inadequate in his presence. Nor did the endless, purely literary discussions in which the New York crowd especially seem to delight, interest him in the slightest. We came at last, out of our deep affection for him, to a quiet *camaraderie* which spoke little, and that little casually, of mountains and people we knew and great poetry. It was a true rest for the spirit.

Out of our friendship with him we carried away one great treasure, the name of our son. We had had enormous difficulty with this, being both, I suppose, incurably literary. But Head is a difficult chunky name with a meaning—the worst kind to handle. And every name we suggested displeased either me, or

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Cloyd, or Janet, or my mother or Cloyd's, or Cloyd's father, or the world at large. Two years had gone by, and the child was still nameless. We had asked Edgar Lee Masters, a genius at nomenclature, for a name, but Lee's mind did not bite on the problem and wandered off on another subject.

One afternoon we saw Robinson going past the studio, and we lured him in with the promise of a drink. I do not believe that E. A., as his friends called him, drank enough to hurt him, but there was a far gleam in his eye at the thought of a little refreshment after a long day's writing. He came in, and we put our problem to him.

"Nobody in the world but you," we said, "could have invented the name Miniver Cheevy, or a dozen others in your books. And we need a name badly. Help us with it."

We told him about the child's character as well as we could, and showed him a photograph. The dear man took it very seriously, in silence as usual. He sat for what seemed a long time looking out of the window at the dusky woods. Then he turned and said, "Marshall."

And Marshall it is! It suited everybody concerned, especially as Cloyd remembered that the great jurist John Marshall was some distant relative of the family. It still seems to us the exact name for the boy.

E. A. was a prodigiously shy man, shy to the point of timidity. I shall never forget the difficulty I had once, later in New York City, in getting him across Fifth Avenue. He stood trembling on the brink, like a child afraid of cold water, and we missed a traffic light because I simply could not coax him off the curb. At the second light I seized him firmly by the elbow and literally propelled him across. Once launched he submitted quietly enough, though visibly shrinking, and we made the perilous passage in safety. I have often wondered how he could have fulfilled his duties as a clerk in the New York cus-

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toms house in his earlier years. But perhaps his extreme shyness came later.

Elinor Wylie was there too, busy writing *Jennifer Lorn*, and engaged to be married to William Rose Benét. Elinor was a most extraordinary person. In her own way she was beautiful—there is no other word for it—and the sentence Benét uses of her in his introduction to her collected poems, “Her bronze hair seemed to have wings, and her head on its beautiful throat to bear the face of one flying,” is singularly exact. She did look just so. There was an almost mystic quality about Elinor at times, shot through with a crystal exactitude of phrase that gave me electric shivers of pleasure. And she was as changeable as the sea: sometimes gay and childlike, sometimes in the depths of depression, sometimes burning with the light of genius.

But she was far too high-strung nervously. Her indomitable will power kept her from showing this in public, but underneath she suffered terribly. Her will power was certainly amazing. She told me once that, after she had eloped with Horace Wylie, abandoning her young son, she had eight times tried to have another living child. Eight times she had gone through the long months of pregnancy and the pains of birth, only to have the child born dead. All her doctors had told her that it was not only useless but dangerous for her to do this, but she had persisted. But unfortunately it did her no good. She never succeeded in her desire, and finally, after one such still birth, she herself was declared dead by several physicians. Only the determination of one doctor who would not give her up, and who worked over her for hours alone, finally brought her back to life. After this she had to give up. Any woman who has borne children will know that this would represent nothing short of heroism.

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Her health therefore was precarious during the latter years of her life. She had very high blood-pressure, and she lived in a state of nervous tension which would have killed an ordinary woman long before it killed Elinor. It was, however, this nervous tension which drove her incessantly to write—to write—and so brought forth her lovely carved poems and her glittering novels.

All the great poets, I feel, are world figures, and the world has a right, after their death, to such information about them as will advance the study of genius. Too many great figures of the past have been obscured for us by the efforts of relatives and friends to smooth over everything which did not fit into a conventional pattern. It is for this reason that I tell here an incident which occurred in Peterboro. It will show in its true light the persecution complex from which Elinor suffered for many years.

At Peterboro the studios had no lighting system and therefore could not be used after dark. There was one large studio, however, which contained a grand piano as well as lights, in which once a month a general gathering of all the artists was held. Here the musicians played their compositions, the poets recited, sometimes a little play was given, and so on. The person who took this studio did so with the understanding that it should become, so to speak, public property on this one evening. The summer we were there Elinor had this studio.

During one of these gatherings I noticed that Elinor, who sat at a little distance from me, was sitting in a peculiarly rigid manner, tense and white. She said nothing, however. When in the course of the proceedings she was asked to recite a poem, she started violently, and I almost expected her to refuse. But she got herself together and gave a short poem very beautifully, relapsing at once into her rigid silence.

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I lingered after the others had gone to see what had troubled her. Herbert Gorman and his wife, good friends of hers, lingered also. No sooner had the door closed on the last of the others than Elinor broke out in a desperate burst of rage and terror.

"Did you see how they hate me, how they all hate me?" she cried. "They are all trying to down me, to injure me, to keep me from working. But I won't be downed! I have a typewriter and a better brain than any of them, and they won't succeed. I'll beat them all yet! Did you see how they asked me to recite so they could laugh at me?" And so on and on endlessly. She was quite out of control, shivering, half screaming, and literally clawing the air. We tried to quiet her, but she became more and more excited, finally coming to the absolute nadir of sense by crying: "And did you see how they left the door open on purpose so that the mosquitoes would get in and bite me tomorrow when I am trying to write? The mosquitoes! I tell you they will stop at nothing!"

Well—we did what we could. Gorman and I took her each by an arm and walked her endlessly through the dark woods, letting her wear herself out. Once indeed I tried to stop her. I swung around and took her firmly by the shoulders and looked into her face. "Listen, Elinor," I said sternly, "nobody is trying to hurt you. They are all perfectly harmless people, and each one is thinking only of himself. Nobody is thinking of you!" For an instant she stopped shivering and looked startled into some sort of sanity, but it passed at once, so much so that I thought she had not even heard me. The hysterical raving recommenced. Finally we thought her sufficiently exhausted, and we took her home and put her to bed. She stayed there for three days. At the end of that time she appeared quite as usual and said to me: "Eunice, I was not sensible the other night. It is as you said. Nobody was thinking



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of me, everybody was thinking of himself." So she had at least heard, poor girl.

It seems almost incredible that the jade-carved beauty of her poetry could have been created above such a volcano of abnormal emotions. Yet, since everything that a person is goes into the making of poems, perhaps this very struggle between her emotions and her intellect, which was enormous, created the peculiar balance of her work, in which the throbbing undercurrent of feeling is subordinated to crystalline form. Perhaps too her determination not to yield to the baleful influences which she felt everywhere around her gave her the driving force which carried her through so much work in so few years against the handicap of ill health. She suffered terribly, but she rejoiced greatly too. At times she was happy as a child. Perhaps in the sum total the books balanced themselves. I can only hope so.

That summer also Padraic and Mary Colum were at Peterboro. We had known them for years and were devoted to them. Mary Colum is one of the most spicy, tangy persons imaginable, a red-headed fighting Irishwoman who is never the same twenty minutes hand-running, and so remains perpetually interesting as well as brilliant. She and Anne Hard, wife of William Hard the publicist, another old friend, are the two most unforecastable women I know and have a special charm for me. Padraic Colum has a quiet other-worldly way of his own and a fine and sensitive mind. He always seems to me the sort of intuitive person with whom the leprechauns must feel quite at home.

One afternoon after work hours Cloyd and I were sitting on the screened porch of their studio when Padraic suddenly sprang up. He went over to the edge of the screen and gently picked up between his finger and thumb a little dusty bee

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which lay there exhausted. He opened the door, took the bee out, and laid it carefully on the grass.

Cloyd instinctively cried out: "Take care, Padraic! He will sting you."

Padraic came back through the door meditatively rubbing his thumb. "He's already done that," he said casually, and he added one of the most amazing remarks I have ever heard. "The poor little bee was so young and inexperienced. I hope he has not hurt himself stinging me!" Nor was there any sort of swank at all about it. Padraic just is like that.

DuBose Heyward was also there that summer, just courting his playwright wife, and Mary Aldis and Louis Gruenberg, the composer, and Florence Wilkinson and a number of others. We have always hoped to return to Peterboro, but somehow the opportunity has never come again.

One more thing occurred during these years. *Poetry* was having one of its rare birthday parties—the tenth, it must have been—and at this dinner the third and last installment of the story of Harriet Monroe and the boorish poet unrolled itself. I had been asked to speak, and I told the story as far as it had then gone, amid general laughter. After the dinner was over and I was standing talking to a group of people, I felt someone tugging at my sleeve. I looked down and there was little Harriet gazing earnestly up into my face and saying, "Eunice, who was that poet who insulted me?" Now I ask you, could a mere bad memory—which was her explanation—account for the continued generosity of this? Never! Harriet's memory was not infallible by any means, but like the rest of us she remembered with great distinctness anything which really mattered to her.

The last summer I am unlikely to forget, because it was one of the busiest times of my life. Harriet had gone off on a cruise around the Mediterranean, to Greece and Egypt, and I

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was editing the magazine. I had been doing my own house work, but in order to go to the office I was obliged to hire one of the most inefficient women God ever made to take care of the house and of Marshall, then not quite four years old. Harriet had left me her salary with her job, and I found that it was exactly the sum I had to pay this paragon of ineptitude! I was reduced to printing several of my own poems and paying myself the usual magazine rates in order not actually to lose money on carfare and lunches.

I was also writing the first of the schoolbooks which I did for the Wheeler Publishing Company of Chicago, and which had to be finished by autumn, in addition to doing part of the housework myself. For another thing, we had decided to up-anchor and sail for Europe, and there were a thousand details to be arranged. After a couple of months of this I was so harassed nervously that I could no longer sleep nor eat properly, and the work was suffering. Then one day a curious release came to me. It was the Fourth of July, and very hot with the dead Chicago heat. I had worked all day as usual, but suddenly in the evening I felt an irresistible desire to go to White City and ride on a roller coaster. Cloyd was as willing as I was, and he and I, dragging the baby by the hand—Janet was off somewhere—went to the amusement park and had a grand time. I rode screaming on everything that moved, I shot in the shooting galleries, I rollicked through the Fun House. And though I came home exhausted, the next morning I was as bright as a new dollar, and continued so. How unutterably strange a mixture are human beings! Since then I go to the amusement parks in moments of strain and nearly always come away refreshed.

The very thought of it makes me feel gay now, and gossipy. Perhaps I shall tell here about Burton Holmes and the school-book, though I know it is telling tales out of turn.

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The book I was writing was one of a series called "The Burton Holmes Travel Stories." They were readers, profusely and very finely illustrated with Holmes' pictures. The text was by different Chicago writers, and mine was on Japan. We had been told that Mr. Holmes would be there in the early autumn and would personally go over the text, but I saw no terrors in that. I was accustomed to being treated with consideration by this time.

When the day came for me to see Mr. Holmes, he set the appointment for eleven o'clock, but he did not arrive till one, and then without apology. By this time I was already beginning to be faint with hunger because of the strain I had been under. He came in, very *élancé* and distinguished looking, sat down, and proceeded to tear my manuscript to pieces bit by bit. Everything in it seemed to displease him. He objected to two hundred details, most of which were in my own province or that of Mr. Wheeler, and not in his own. I was glad to be corrected on matters of fact, but not on English by Mr. Holmes, who is no master of it. For three hours he kept at it, while I swayed with hunger and raged inwardly, and during this entire time he had not said one single word of encouragement. At last, when he had questioned the final "and" and "but" and it was all over, I rose and faced him.

"Mr. Holmes," I said pointedly, "now that you have told me all the things wrong with the book, is there anything at all in it which pleases you? After three hours of steady carping I should like to know."

Holmes is one of those people who have to be challenged in order to bring out their best side. Many important people are like this, I find. They tramp in blissful disregard on everyone they meet, till one stands up to them and faces them down. Then they are charming. So it proved that day. Mr. Holmes

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instantly turned about face and told me at great length what a delightful book he thought it. "It is far better than I had hoped," he said finally, "but surely anyone who can write so fine a book does not need to be flattered about it!" Which only goes to show how little people sometimes know of the value of a reasonable human appreciation.

When I went into the outer office I spoke to Mr. Wheeler. "That was one of the most disagreeable experiences I have had in a long while," I said. It was now four o'clock, and I had to hold to the edge of his desk for hunger and nervous weakness. Wheeler snorted. "Why!" he cried. "I could hear you through the door. That was a love feast compared to the other interviews! You have come out a conquering hero!" I heard later that one of the authors came out with a white set face, threw the manuscript of her book on Mr. Wheeler's desk, said she would never have anything more to do with it as long as she lived, and tore out. Another burst into such an attack of hysterical tears that she had to be taken home in a taxi. So I took comfort and crawled away to find something to eat. The book, incidentally, was a great success when it was finally published.

As for Burton Holmes, having once been challenged, he proved to be unfailingly courteous and charming to me thereafter. I did another similar reader some years later, on China this time, in collaboration with my sister Louise Hammond, and I spent many pleasant hours with Mr. Holmes in his New York apartment, where he and his good wife were kindness itself to me. His photographs are a real delight, and he gave me the run of them. We came in the end to be good friends, and he paid me a tremendous compliment, from the point of view of a photographer. He read my *Profiles from China* and told me quite seriously, "It is one of a half-dozen books I have read

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which could not be improved by photographs to illustrate it.”

So finally the autumn came. All my tasks were finished somehow, and Cloyd Head left the Year Book Publishers—and financial security—for good. We set out on a life of adventure and creative work, with Europe as the first step. Though we have often been poor we have never regretted it.

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### We Shove Off for Europe

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WE SAILED in early October of 1923, and never did adventurers start with gayer hearts.

We had little money. For those who are interested, it divided up to fifty dollars a week for the four of us, including all expenses except the passage across. We expected to live in great poverty, but prices had gone down after the war and we found that it was ample. Indeed, towards the end of our sojourn we were living almost in the grand manner. Twelve dollars and a half per week can still be opulence for a single person—in the right place.

We stopped first in Paris for six weeks. In the five years since the war ended the town had done much to recover its old-time mood—though personally I have never liked Paris as a city so much as in war-time. In spite of the dirty politics I saw then, there was a human community of heart among the Parisians in general which is lacking in peace.

We met Ford Madox Ford there, and found him a most human and kindly old man and a devout Francophile. And at last I set eyes on the almost mythical Ezra Pound! He was living in the Latin Quarter, invited us to tea at the Deux Magots and took us to his home to introduce us to Mrs. Pound and George Antheil. He was indeed quite unexpect-

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edly kind to us, yet all the while with so palpable an air of being good to the country mouse that I could not help being amused. Come to think of it, the country mouse's side of the story has never been adequately presented.

Cloyd Head and I dashed up to Noyon for a day. Much of the town was still in ruins, though in places it had been rebuilt. During the war I had stopped at a hotel which had had, as an adjunct to it, the house where John Calvin was born in 1509. At that time I had stood in the single downstairs room, unchanged except for furniture since his day, and had tried to imagine what that stern and uncompromising man must have been like as a baby. So now I wanted to show it to Cloyd. But what was my astonishment to find that, although I had lived in the hotel for a number of weeks, I could not now discover even the site where it had stood. Finally I appealed to an old peasant woman, and she led us to the particular crumbling ruin which had been Calvin's house. We stood in the autumn wind, our feet among the fallen stones, and suddenly time became for a moment vividly fourth-dimensional, and the ghastly pageant of human war and cruelty and bigotry moved palpably before us. Nor could we see the end of it.

But the prize story of Paris that time belongs to our little son, then four years old. He was a handsome child, with big brown eyes and baby curls, always remarkable in a crowd, and it was his looks which brought the event upon me.

There was a big religious festival—I rather think it must have been All Saints' Day—and a special celebration was to take place in Notre Dame. So I took Janet and Marshall and went to see it. Cloyd for some reason could not go. The great cathedral was at its best, alight with candles and crowded in every corner with worshippers. We stood among the crowd



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and waited. When the procession commenced, bearing certain relics of the saints, the crowd squeezed back to make room for it in such a fashion that we found ourselves in the front row. It was headed by a resplendent beadle who carried a long staff and walked some distance ahead of the procession proper. As this man passed me he swerved suddenly aside and addressed me.

*"Avancez franchement, madame, avec l'enfant,"* he said, and went on his resplendent way.

Not being a Roman Catholic and knowing nothing of procedure, I was nonplussed. Why should I advance frankly? I was a mere onlooker. So I did nothing at all, only waited. Even today, when I think of what followed, I can feel the blood mount to my cheeks. It was one of the few events of my life to which I was totally and absolutely inadequate, and which left me without a shred of face-saving.

After an incense bearer, a cross bearer, and others had passed us to the roll of the organ, the Archbishop of Paris appeared. He was a magnificent spectacle, in full canonicals, wearing a great gold-embroidered cape which spread out so far that two young priests walked beneath it at his sides, holding it outspread like a small tent. Behind him were more dignitaries and shining crosses.

To my utter horror, as they came abreast of us the Archbishop and his two satellites turned in a sweeping curve and came to rest in front of me. With them came a tremendous emotional sense of outgiving, a pouring of beneficence upon me. And he extended his hand towards Marshall, holding his bishop's ring before the child's face. I was utterly baffled. I saw through a haze of confusion the entire procession halted behind them, I saw the walled faces of the worshippers looking at me, I heard the organ roll in the distance—and all I

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could think of to do was to snatch off the child's cap, which I had thoughtlessly left on his head, and to push him forward before the Archbishop.

Time stood still. The moment endured for centuries. Finally I felt the beneficence slowly withdraw itself, to be followed by a cold wind of disapproval. I shrivelled in it, totally lost. And then Marshall, blessed baby! saved the day. Seeing this magnificence standing motionless before him, the outspread hand before his face, and feeling that something must be done, he reached up his chubby fist, took as much of the pontifical hand as he could hold in his own and shook it vigorously! Instantly the Archbishop became a human being. A kindly smile of amusement lit up his face, he patted the child's head in friendly fashion and moved on.

Afterwards I learned that what I should have done was to fall on my knees, kiss the ring and give it to the child to kiss. Then the Archbishop, who was very fond of children, would have given the boy a special blessing. But I profoundly hope that life does not hold many such moments for me!

In Paris also we had one of those rare evenings which fertilize the spirit. The Moscow Art Theatre was there, giving performances at the Champs-Élysées. We had met Stanislavsky in Chicago, and Cloyd had some questions he particularly wanted to ask him. So we wrote asking for an appointment and were told to meet him after one of the performances. It happened that this was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Art Theatre. We met him in his dressing room, Cloyd and Janet and I, and repaired with him to a restaurant for the usual late theatrical dinner. Stanislavsky does not speak English; so the conversation took place in French, and most of it devolved on me, since, though Cloyd understands French and speaks it adequately enough for practical matters, he was hardly up to this.

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Something in the occasion, in the revaluing of events an anniversary always brings, and in our frank admiration of his work, started him talking—after our questions had been answered—about his artistic philosophy, his dreams, his successes, and his failures. In that little cubby-hole in the restaurant, his marvellous voice went on and on for hours, sometimes coolly evaluating, sometimes shaken with emotion, talking of those things which meant most to him, while we sat so spell-bound that we scarcely dared to breathe.

It was nearly four o'clock when we reluctantly set out for his hotel. The night was beautiful, with a waning moon riding high over the Seine, and we chose to walk. Still the voice went on as we passed through the silent streets and across the bridge. Finally, just before we reached his hotel, I asked one last question. He had been talking of a project of his, never realized by which his company, Eleanora Duse, Moissi, and one or two others of the grand old actors should combine to preserve the last of the old traditions, now so fast dying.

"Monsieur, what will become of your work, what will become of art, when you great people are gone?"

Stanislavsky stopped beside a high wall, the moonlight on his tall figure and his stirred face, and threw out his arms in a hopeless gesture.

"Art, the theatrical art we know, can only perish. The young people are all too hasty, too undisciplined. They are not willing to learn their medium. They wish only for personal success, are incapable of becoming great artists. Only a half-dozen of us are left now. When we die the era of half-things will be on you. There is no future. Art will perish!" And tears glinted in his eyes.

And, though I know that art is immortal and will be re-born as long as man lives, yet I was so moved that I could hardly find words to comfort him. I tried to tell him that all

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great and gallant things which have ever existed never die, but continue to exist mystically forever. But he would not listen. With infinite sadness he said good-bye and strode off in the moonlight. We have never seen him again.

But we had no intention of living in Paris, and presently we moved down to the Riviera. There we took a small villa in Vence, in the Alpes-Maritimes. At that time there were not so many Americans in Vence as at present, and D. H. Lawrence had not yet come *in extremis*. We lived very quietly, underneath the majestic head of the Baou des Blancs. Vence is a walker's paradise, and we went on innumerable expeditions afoot to the picturesque medieval villages in the neighborhood, to St. Paul, perched on its hilltop, to Tourettes, even more moving to me, to St. Jeannet and the others. Will Hollingsworth, the illustrator, came down from Paris to visit us for a while. But for the most part we worked hard—and loved it all.

I was writing a book, later published under the title *Profiles from Home*—sketches in free verse of things seen in the United States, on the technical model of the Chinese *Profiles*. Of all my books of poems this one has been the least liked—just why, I could never discover. It dropped into a slot for some reason. Cloyd was working himself into playwriting after the years in another field. Janet was studying, and Marshall was growing. It was a fine winter. Towards spring Cloyd went on a wide swing through Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia, visiting the more dynamic theatres and meeting impresarios, technical people, and such. He has a grand story about Max Reinhardt in Vienna which does not belong here!

When spring came we moved still farther south, to Italy. We had found that it is much more economical, when travelling with a family, to send one member on ahead to make arrangements before bringing on the others. I spoke a little

Italian, so I went on alone. We had decided on Florence, and I put up at a pension on Lungarno and prepared to find a house in the hills. The town was too hot for the summer.

I had a plan. While we were in Vence somebody whom we knew had told us that Gertrude Stein lived in Settignano and would know the ropes. The friend had written to Miss Stein and had received this answer: "Tell her to take the tram up from the Cathedral to Settignano, to go to the Caffè Desiderio and ask for Signorina Anita; to tell the Signorina that I have sent her and that she needs a villa." This is not Gertrude Stein's English, but the substance of this most kindly advice.

But in the pension I ran across old friends of my mother's from Evanston, and they dissuaded me. Settignano was on the wrong side of the hills for summer, they said. They would help me find a house. Weakly I permitted myself to be turned aside and to go to their agent, a suave American accustomed to dealing with the extraordinary colony of wealthy and near-wealthy American expatriates who lived in Florence. There were six thousand of them permanently living in the city and its environs then, in an ultra-aesthetic atmosphere of antiques and faded glory, trying vainly to recapture the *quattrocento*, but a *quattrocento* quite emasculated and gutless. Their conversation habitually dealt with Giotto's masterpieces, and how crude America was. I came to pity them all profoundly. But my first introduction to this world was a small debacle.

I set out with a list of "simple, inexpensive villas." As they were scattered about the hills, I was obliged to hire a car for the day, though I knew I could not really afford it. I went from one decayed magnificence to another, all of them charming and in impeccably "good taste," but all of them so far beyond our pocket-book that it began to be funny. Finally in the afternoon I came to a château somewhere. From it emerged an American who looked like the millionaire of fiction. He

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was very gracious to me and showed me over the place. It was a castle, no less. It was a huge fourteenth century house with a little gem of a thirteenth century chapel attached. It was filled with genuine and priceless antiques, and a *podere*, a farm, went with it. As we strolled through the elaborate gardens the millionaire threw in casually that he would be happy if I kept his six servants during the summer, and that the *podere* was really not expensive to operate and would give me fresh vegetables!

At last I stopped short. "Unwittingly I am here under false pretences," I said. "We belong to the honest poor, and have nothing to do with this at all. I came because the agent gave me the address. He called this 'a simple place'!" "But it is simple," expostulated my compatriot. "Life here is very simple. We live like the birds in the fields. And besides, the place only rents for six thousand lire a month."

I fled. I ordered my Jehu back to Florence, where he charged me four hundred lire for the car for the day. And here was I, with our fifty dollars a week, with my family coming in a few days, and such a condition of affairs! When I went to bed I was a complete wreck, too distraught even to curse effectively. I could only weep into the pillow and wallow.

In the morning, however, I knew that the angel who had always looked out for us could not so completely have deserted me, and that I had only strayed off my beat. I arose firmly, avoiding my home-side acquaintances, and went to the Cathedral, where I took the tram for Settignano. It cost me two lire. At the top I found the Caffè Desiderio, and in it a tall blonde girl who answered to the name of Signorina Anita. I told her in my sketchy Italian that Gertrude Stein had sent me, and that I wanted a house. She put on her hat, and we walked up the street into the unique place, made in heaven for us.

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It was a modern reproduction of a fourteenth century villa, belonging to an antique dealer in Florence. It was of stone, set in a small but delightful garden on the side of a hill. Below it Florence lay spread like a great shimmering map, the indescribable loveliness of Brunelleschi's dome floating like a bubble above the city. And inside, it was completely furnished—except for the very modern bathroom—in fourteenth century style, some of the furniture being genuine antique and the rest reproductions. Altogether it took my breath away with its beauty and charm. And there was a servant caretaker who lived next door and would do the housework for a pittance. The rent was well within our budget. Glory be to Gertrude Stein!

We settled in for a delectable summer. It was hot, yes, but the heat was nothing to one nurtured in Chicago. And we did not attempt to go down into the town in the heat of the day. In the morning we worked, and in the afternoon we went down to Florence and wandered among the remains of the mighty past of the Renaissance. We had many spiritual adventures and grew apace, and though the High Renaissance is not altogether to my own taste, being too perfect and lacking somewhat in vitality, I learned to love it deeply and to settle my own philosophy with regard to it.

My own real love in Italian painting I found when we went on a short trip to Siena, in the primitives. The fundamental naïveté of these paintings, overlaid as the primitive always is with complexity, threw me into a veritable ecstasy. It rang the authentic little bell inside me which is the true test of affinity. From that day on I knew where I stood with regard to visual art. I was later to learn that this was also true with regard to peoples.

While we were in Florence we avoided the Americans as much as possible. We always do this, except for a very few in-

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dividuals, believing that it is useless to go to a foreign country to consort with people who might live across the street at home. Our plan is always to make friends with the local inhabitants, usually the common people, and try to live ourselves into the country, to see with its eyes and enjoy its pleasures and pains. The surface of things has never interested us much.

So we all, and especially Janet, played with the peasants of the Bosco, as they call the village. We learned their songs and sat out in the moonlight with them, laughing and singing for hours on end in happy peasant fashion, or went on picnics with them into the surrounding hills. We became interested in the puppets which all the children love and know how to manipulate, those puppets which alone preserve intact the old tradition of the *Commedia dell' Arte*. We came to know Stentarello, the Florentine puppet, and Giacomo da Bergamo with his three goiters, and the Doctor, and Rosina and Pantalone and a dozen others. We made little plays for them and adopted them permanently.

But the high spot, for sheer color, of the Bosco was the funerals. I have seen funerals of many peoples in many countries, from the hasty pitiful commitment of the dead in war time to sumptuous oriental processions that lasted for hours, but I have never seen anything so moving as these peasant burials. The procession started in the village, after the Catholic service in the church, and wound upward through the hills to the little cemetery. Everyone in the village took part. The men were dressed in the hooded cowls of the Misericordia, that society whose members remain anonymous and who attend to the burial of the dead and to other civic necessities, now as in the time of the Medici. Their strange black silhouettes carried the coffin, the cross, and the many floral offerings. The little boys went beside them holding aloft the





JANET IN MEDIEVAL COSTUME IN THE VILLA AT SETTIGNANO  
(Photo by Head)



## WE SHOVE OFF FOR EUROPE

flaring torches which flickered in the moonlight, and the women walked behind and beside the procession, sobbing quietly. There was music too, a black-clad band which played always the same funeral march, a strange slow haunting tune which seemed to contain all the sorrow of mankind and all the dignity of death. Otherwise they moved in complete silence. We followed them to the cemetery, along cypress-lined roads in the glorious Italian moonlight, and there we found the last pitiful and beautiful tribute. For on every grave a little light burned, the tiny yellow flames dotting the hillside, the older dead welcoming the newly dead. After the last words had been said and the dirt shovelled in, a light was lit above the scarred place in the ground—and the confraternity of death was complete.

But though we saw few Americans, I remember that Buckner Kirk came to visit us, and that we did meet two couples of friends from America. One was Mrs. Isaacs, the very able editor of *Theatre Arts*, and her husband. They were old friends, and we practically obliged them to come up the hill and see us. They had too little time and demurred at first, but when they had seen our villa and our view they were as enchanted as we were. "It is like living in a small Davanzati Palace," said Mrs. Isaacs. And it was true.

Another couple was Burton Holmes and his wife. We saw them one day in town, quite by accident, riding in an old-fashioned horse taxi. Janet ran after them for a block before she caught them and demanded that they come out to tea, which they did. They also were enthusiastic, and Holmes surprised us by taking four dozen pictures.

This visit of the Holmes was a sort of turning point for us. The autumn was approaching, when we had planned to return to America. But our fifty dollars a week had stretched so far that we still had money left for another adventure, and

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we had hatched the plan of having an exotic finish, a sort of spiced dessert. So we wanted to go to North Africa for a few weeks and then sail home by the Mediterranean route. But we had no idea where to go—being as innocent of knowledge of the country as prairie chickens. So we appealed to the Holmes. First I took Mr. Holmes aside and asked him where, with our pocketbook and our temperament, we should go. He reflected and said, "Hammamet, in Tunisia." Then I took Mrs. Holmes aside, without telling her what he had said, and asked her the same question. "Hammamet, in Tunisia," said she. So at least they were agreed.

They very kindly wrote to Mme. Santoliquido, American wife of an Italian composer of music who lived in the village, and she answered that we could rent a villa there, complete with servants, and that she would arrange the matter for us. So that was set.

On the way down to Naples we stopped at Rapallo on the coast to pay a visit of respect to Gordon Craig. Cloyd had long been a great admirer, almost a disciple of his from afar, and we wanted to see him in the flesh. He proved to be even more stimulating than we had hoped. With his distinguished face, his snow-white hair, and his creatively penetrating mind he, and his charming family, gave us several very happy hours. Though he spoke somewhat bitterly of the way his ideas had been appropriated without credit by the theatrical world, he showed us none of the more difficult side of his nature which has caused him to quarrel with so many well-wishers. The visit was a sheer pleasure.

After Rome, where, I am ashamed to say, we were green enough to allow our pocket to be picked in the railway station, we went on to Naples and sailed from there straight into a country which was to turn our interest permanently away from Europe and towards the Orient—and the primitive.

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## 14

### Tunisia, Land of Enchantment

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THERE are certain things which must perforce be slighted in this record, not because I choose to omit them, but because they themselves refuse to be clothed in words. They will not come down, they will not be distilled into the little black and white hieroglyphs on a page. They are ageless and vast and untouchable. One should not worry them with words.

How, for instance, can I describe for you the Sahara Desert, though it is rooted so deeply in me? How can I make emptiness come alive? For it is only a degree less empty than the great interstellar spaces where the mind wanders, lost and shivering. Yet the desert is a living force. It lies there eternally, burning at noonday, freezing at night, vaster than imagination, more lonely than the last hour of the dying, more impersonal than destiny. It burns under the eyelids. It is so overpowering in its immensity that any living creature upon it is thrown back upon his last refuge, upon "I am." And I have seen that not only men but beasts also, venturing upon its face in twos and threes, with all that immensity to walk upon, yet crowd continually upon one another, rub shoulders and thighs, in the pitiful effort at reassurance. Those who have touched it, who have drunk it into their blood, can carry it away with them—but there is little that they can share

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with others. It is like the immanence of God, to be felt but not to be communicated.

An oasis can perhaps be shadowed forth, such an oasis as Nefta, "The Pearl of the Desert," for it is small and compact and human, and words were made for human things. Nefta lies in a little socket of the Sahara in southern Tunisia, below eroded red walls from which gush many streams of milky-green cool water. It is roofed with date-palms, tall and dusty green against the blue of heaven, and it is floored with the vivid green of rye and small growing things. Semi-settled Bedouins tend it. It is a crossroad for the caravans that traverse the wastes.

The town is not built in the oasis upon arable land, every inch of which is precious, but beyond it upon the edge of the desert. It is a small village of mud houses, which sometimes crumble into dirt in the rare rains that every two or three years roar down upon it with an almost tropical downpour, refreshing the inner springs. It has a mosque, a few small *souks*, a French inn, and that center of humanity the market place.

Sitting on a balcony overlooking this market place, hour after hour, day after day, we saw the whole of the human life of the desert pass before us. The essential dignity of man was there, his pitifulness and spareness, the deep roots of religion, the call of hot blood. Caravans from the desert trek across it or unload there, the great bales warped down from the dusty grunting camels, disgorging rugs and silks and salt and anti-mony. The white-clad Bedouins walk here with their free gait and their beautiful gestures. Blind singers chant the Koran to the tinkle of a guitarlike instrument, or tell by the hour together the epic tales of that early hero of the Arabs, the great Antar. They weep as they sing, tears streaming from their sightless eyes. Pedlars from Senegal, so black that towards dusk

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their faces are empty black holes in their white robes, cry their wares of thread and garters and dry cakes. Camels and donkeys and horses are everywhere, a few sheep among them. And children run and scuttle in the dust.

We were there in Ramadan, the month of fasting. It is no easy thing to fast, in this spot where the air is so dry that no matter how hard one may labor in the heat of the desert sun, no perspiration is ever felt, for it dries as it touches the air, to fast here not only from food and from tobacco but from water also from sunup to sunset. Yet these people do it as a matter of course. At dusk, from where we sat, the sun went down like a burning bush into the desert and the tower of the mosque grew black against the reddening sky. The market place was always crowded then, dotted everywhere in its broad expanse with white figures that melted into the dusk. But when the muezzin began his beautiful wavering call to prayer, he had hardly finished the first sentence when hundreds of little flames went up, the matches with which the Arabs were lighting their cigarettes, and from every doorway darted children, each carrying a sweet drink with which to wet the parched throats. For after the long fast, drink and a cigarette are the first things the men want. They are hardly hungry at all for the meal which follows. Not till shortly before dawn do they eat with relish their one real meal of the twenty-four hours.

Tempers are short too in Ramadan, especially towards afternoon. Sudden sharp quarrels broke out in rains of savage gutturals that hissed and spat and growled, leading sometimes to the quick flash and the gushing blood.

And humor was there too. One afternoon before our balcony an old white she-camel squatted, her legs folded beneath her. For many hours she sat there patiently, a load of firewood, the brush from the desert, tied to her back. Towards five o'clock this brush was sold, and her owner prepared to de-

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part. But the old camel was out of sorts and would not get up. The owner cursed her roundly, calling her "a dog, a pig, and a Jew," and rained blows upon her. She turned her head and grunted crossly, but did not move. He appealed for help, and another Bedouin strolled up. Now one pulled and one pushed, but to no effect. Then two more came and they all pushed, pulled, and belabored. This time the camel tried to bite them and growled more savagely than they could curse. But she would not get up.

Now an amused council of war was held, and somebody had a brilliant idea. A few sticks of brush were brought, the camel's tail was held up and a small fire built beneath it. When she felt the heat, she shuffled forward a few feet on her knees and settled down afresh. That was too much! Amid general laughter the helpers gave up and went about their business, leaving the disconsolate Bedouin who owned her squatting dejectedly on his haunches to wait the old lady's good time. It was well after dusk when suddenly, for no apparent reason, she gathered her legs beneath her and heaved herself awkwardly up with a last roar of displeasure, to follow after her master as detachedly as a Chinese sage might follow a mongrel dog.\*

Nefta and the desert gave me something, obscure but very real, a sense of spaciousness, a knowledge of the unquenchable vitality of the human spirit. I have never really lost it, though I could wish that I did not so often lose sight of it in the hurly-burly of everyday living.

We went also to Kairouan, the holy city of Tunisia. The Arabs there say that seven pilgrimages to Kairouan are worth one to Mecca. We have been there twice and would gladly go the other five times!

\* I have incorporated this incident in my book for children *Boy of the Desert*.



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It is a large place, Kairouan, its houses of baked mud-brick sprawled behind walls which shut out the arid half-desert about it. A place of many mosques and many graveyards where the fallen pilgrims lie under the steady sun. And strangely, here in the most holy city of the country the mosques are open to foreigners, though everywhere else they are closed. This is because when the French conquered the country the very presence of their soldiers in the city—though I have been told by the Arabs themselves that the French did no act of forthright desecration—was sufficient to pollute its holiness and so render it immaterial whether more *Roumis* come or not. But the French government sees to it that foreigners behave with respect within the city's walls.

It was here that we watched the most spectacular meeting of the Aissaouai which we have seen, though in Hammamet we attended quieter meetings. This is the strange sect which believes that the road to Paradise lies through self-torture. The ceremony took place in a large room whose upper end was filled with seated figures of musicians, in the midst of whom the Imam sat, a serene figure in white. In the open space before them the participants worked themselves into a wild religious fervor during which they ate scorpions, ground up pieces of glass between their teeth and swallowed them, cut themselves about the naked waist with swords, drove darts through the flesh of their cheeks and allowed sharp spikes to be pounded into the hollows of the neck. Each man, when he had tortured himself enough, was led to the Imam, and the serene figure gathered him literally into his bosom, quieted him with soothing formulas till the madness went from him and he arose, to don his clothing again and sit quietly among the musicians.

We looked carefully at the faces of the participants. There in Kairouan they were all in some way degenerate, half-witted

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or hysterical cases, deformed or pathological. Most of them were adults, but among them was one boy of perhaps thirteen whose face seemed of another caliber, more frank and not visibly abnormal. He was trying hard, poor lad, to achieve the necessary degree of frenzy which serves as an anesthetic so that the pain is not felt. But he could not succeed. He went ahead with the torture, but at each fresh access of pain his flesh crept and quivered and his eyes, not glazed with fanaticism as were the eyes of the others, rolled in agony. The officiating member whose duty it was to drive the spikes into his neck, watched him closely, and gave only the lightest of taps. Then he sent the boy to the Imam. But his poor tortured face haunted me for days.

These Aissaouai in Kairouan, however, are perhaps not quite typical, since they will perform for the tourists if paid sufficiently well. In Hammamet the men are of a higher caliber, and many men of standing in the village belong to the sect. They seldom have these orgies, though they do occasionally. I spoke of them afterwards to a French doctor who has tended them often. He told me that the anesthesia produced by the frenzy is very real. They actually feel no pain, and what is more the wounds do not bleed, and close again at once. By the following day nothing is left of a cut but a small scar. With the glass, nails, and other things which are swallowed the case is different, however. After the frenzy is past they remain in the stomach and must often be removed by an operation.

It is not, however, Kairouan which I am most anxious to have you see, but Hammamet, the white village where we lived, whose mark is upon us for good. When I fell to thinking how to tell about Hammamet I remembered an article I had once written for *Asia* concerning it. The magazine named it *The Hidden Kingdom of the Rooftops* and illustrated it with pho-

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tographs Cloyd had taken. I wrote it in America soon after I returned, and I find it now to have been written with a great nostalgia, the village seen through a haze of distance and affection. But I could not do so well today, and I give it here substantially as it was written while the scene was still warm in me.

Dusk has just fallen. A New England moon, turning at the full, brightens from white to gold above the tree tops. The air is heavy with the fulness of summer, and the odor of syringa and early roses hangs like a cloud about me.

On such a night in Hammamet, on that Barbary coast which is half a world away, the moon will be newly minted silver, heavy and sharp and warm from the melting. There will be perhaps a pink cloud about it—do not ask me how, but I have seen it! The terrace of our villa, the flat whitewashed roof, like a floor among the tops of the date-palms and the pepper-trees, will be paved and washed with silver, and silver will drip from the fat thorny leaves of the cactus hedge and touch the orange-blossoms to filigree. Mingled with the scent of the roses and the orange-blossoms will come a pungent spicy odor. What it is I do not know, nor where it comes from; yet it seems to be everywhere, to drift on every breeze, a fragrant symbol of this land of the Arabs, where the nose is still an honored member of society and sweets are spread for its delectation.

Beyond the ring of the garden, gray-green now in the moonlight, the white sand of the beach is silver-gray, and beyond that again breathes the warm sea, the sea that is so much bluer and so much saltier than the seas of home. To the left we can just discern the frowning turtle-gray mass of the Kasbah, the old Saracen fort that dominates the village. With the gray tessellated walls of the village itself, relic of some older,

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more savage time, falling now into decay, the Kasbah gives the town from the sea a look of embattled belligerence that quite belies the kindly fisherfolk who dwell beneath it.

Under the silver magic of the moon the housetops of the town gleam like the sugar houses in the fairy-tale, white and crisp and immaterial. They are a kingdom in themselves, these housetops, the kingdom of the hidden Arab women. Lifted out of sight of the street—and the men—the roofs stretch in many levels, each level the height of a house, from wall to wall of the village. Many of them are accessible one to another. With a ladder one might pass anywhere. Here the women stretch their many-colored cloths to dry in the sun; here they bake the flat loaves of Arabian bread, fragrant with caraway.

Here too they come together, especially toward dusk when the heat grows less, to gossip and to pass the news from mouth to mouth and from hand to hand. For the Arab women, like all prisoners, have a secret code, a sign language understood of them all, with which they signal across the white roofs from house to house and from street to street. Once when we had taken down to a friend's house in the village our tiny puppet-theatre, in which the Italian *burattini* performed with admirable indifference an Americanized fairy-tale of a princess who weds an Arab prince, our friends begged us first to go upon the roof. Half across the village other women waved from distant roofs. Our friends waved also, though we noticed nothing like a signal. Yet no sooner had we set the puppets up than a horde of children—who are free agents, even the girls—trooped in from all quarters, filling the room to bursting, and as they came they said, "Where is the fun you told us of?" It was the secret code, the speech of the prisoners.

So, by the housetops, life is made endurable. For what need has a woman who can neither read nor write to know more



A STREET IN HAMMAMET: SOUKS AND THE KASBAH  
(Photo by Head)



## TUNISIA, LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

than her own household and the town gossip? Has M'na been asked in marriage by the son of a schoolmaster? Have the pangs of childbirth begun for Khadya? Or has death called for Zeineb? In an hour the women know.

No men are allowed upon the roofs. Even on his own roof a man may go only at certain times and for a special purpose, as to mend a leak or bring in a rug, and even then he may not linger nor appear to look about him. For on the roofs the women go unveiled. The muezzin only may sing undisturbed in the tower of the mosque, and *Monsieur le Sheik*, the dignified Arab mayor of the village under the French government, may stand on the roof of the Kasbah. He is "*le père du village*"; yet we suspect that even he presumes a little. The women, when they see him, grow uneasy, and in a few moments the gleaming roofs are empty.

To walk in the streets on such a moonlight night is to walk in the ways of a dream. Just within the main gate, where the *souks*, the simple shops, are placed, a few men still sit, and from the Moorish café comes the sound of a flute, perhaps, or the voice of a man singing. But once beyond, in the maze of narrow streets reality ceases. The flat white walls rise on either side, broken now and then by a dark doorway or a high latticed window. The sand underfoot makes no sound; the houses are silent with the heavy silence of the southlands. The streets, which one can often span by outstretched arms, turn sharply, always at right angles, weaving in and out like the passages of a labyrinth, and over it all the moonlight pours like a palpable stream, cutting the world into a sharp design of black and silver. A strange lightness in the head comes over me as I walk there in the moon, an exaltation of beauty like wine in the veins.

Only once I met reality there on such a night. My daughter and I were walking in a far maze of passages we hardly knew,

and at a corner we hesitated. As we stood, a sudden gust of scent came to us, ambergris or musk, warm and seductive, and we knew that a woman was approaching. Silently, like a white specter, she was upon us. She wore an outer garment of light wool, in which she was wound and wrapped almost as if inside a cocoon, only one eye showing dark in the shade of the upper fold. She was coming fresh from the *hammam*, the Moorish bath, where no doubt her little bare feet with their weighty silver anklets had been newly painted with henna. At sight of us wandering in this far corner, she dropped her veil so that we might see her face, and spoke in her soft gutturals. Our Arabic is none too good, but we made out, "What is the matter?" My daughter answered, "Promenading." This was all we could compass, but it seemed to her incredible. Women do not promenade, even in daylight, and at night! So she spoke again, more insistently.

Then as suddenly and as silently as the woman had come, a man rounded the corner running. The little lady might have been part of the dream, but the man was quite, quite real. His aspect was threatening as that of a pouncing hawk, and his face bore the set look of a great fanaticism. He was her husband, who had come walking, as is proper, twenty or thirty paces behind her so that he might protect her. In the narrow passageways he was out of sight, but he had heard her speak. If he had found a man with her, tragedy had been afoot; for the Arab kills without second thought any Mussulman who annoys his women, and even the French government asks no unnecessary questions. But at sight of the two crazy foreign women, whose identity he knew—as who did not in the village?—the look faded to one of mild astonishment, and bidding us a pleasant good evening, he passed by. But a vague uneasiness came upon us, in spite of the moon, and we walked home more quickly through the black and silver world.



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The gorgeous nights also are broken often by the insistent tambours and *darbukehs*, beating from eleven o'clock until dawn in the alluring rhythms of the wedding-ceremony. We westerners who hear a drum when the children march in to school, when the Knights of Columbus parade, or, at best, when it is lost in the mazes of a symphony orchestra, can have no conception of the subtlety, the variety, or the strange throbbing catch of a tambour in the hands of an Arab musician. Like the beat of a tom-tom, its constant reiteration stirs one oddly. It is a solo instrument, and its only element is rhythm; yet it compasses, within this limitation, an almost incredible range.

Many of the rhythms are like our own; yet many are so curiously involved, so racially distinct from our own, that for a long time our ears could not distinguish them. It took our family literally weeks to be able to beat on a *darbukeh*, a pottery drum beaten by hand, the first of the rhythms we learned, and a relatively simple one it was. Yet a good *darbukeh* player knows probably forty such rhythms, and a good beater of the big two-headed tambour, which is played with one stick above and one below, knows many more. Pure rhythm is a thing that reaches down to the roots of the universe; at the sound of the tambours across the housetops of a still night strange thoughts stir in some unexpected depths of one's being. Recently I found in a book by Ananda Coomaraswamy a description of a symbolic statue of Siva, the great god of the Indians, whose many arms hold many symbols of differing attributes. One sentence, reading, "Creation arises from the drum," an Arab would understand.

Perhaps it is some wordless realization of it that makes the drum so prominent in the Arab wedding-ceremony. Five days the ceremonies last in Hammamet, and for five nights the tambours throb.

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To us the weddings were a perpetual pageant of which we could not tire. It is fortunate to be a foreign woman in Hammamet; I was admitted to all the ceremonies for bride and bridegroom alike, while my husband was admitted to the masculine half only. Arab ceremonies differ from village to village, and Hammamet has some of the most interesting on the Barbary coast.

The little bride, who is exchanging one life prison for another, approaches the event with mixed feelings. Although she has no choice in the matter of a husband, these matters being decided by the wisdom of the ancients, she has surely seen the groom, peeping down at him from the housetop or between the folds of her robe as she passes to mosque or *hammam*. She knows him also by hearsay. But theoretically the groom has never set eyes on her except in her swaddling outer garments. Practically, however, I believe a man of the younger generation, here in the village where the rules are not so strict as in the cities, usually manages with the aid of a complaisant woman relative to catch glimpse enough to be sure he is not being given the booby-prize.

Ever since, a demure maiden of eight or ten, she has been able to hold a needle correctly, the bride has been sewing and preparing for this event. She has at least a dozen embroidered shirts, done in small patterns of conventionalized flowers and insects. Arabs see nothing incongruous in a bridal shirt adorned with neat little rows of scorpions or bedbugs! She has also several velvet inner gowns with lace sleeves, a number of caplike head-dresses with long scarfs, sundry smaller silk scarfs and accessories, many vials of perfume and last and most important the great ceremonial gown itself, stiff as a piece of medieval armor and embroidered in great sheets of solid gold. This finery is her dower, and if misfortune overtakes the married couple, it may be sold. Her jewelry, which is one of the

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important facts in the universe, consists principally of heavy gold chains and bracelets. In the village they are seldom set with jewels, but many are strung with heart-shaped beads of sweet-smelling paste, made of rose-leaves, spices, and perfume. When you hold this paste in your hand, the warmth brings out a rich, somnolent odor. All the jewels are worn at once, so that the effect smites the eye.

When the days of the ceremonies arrive, the bride stiffens into a lay figure, a doll. It is not seemly for her to express any emotion whatever except sorrow, however much her heart may beat with pride and expectation. Her face becomes a mask, depersonalized, oblivious. She ceases almost to be herself and becomes that curious exotic figure, the Arab Bride, whom one comes to think of as a symbol. Passive in the hands of the mistress of ceremonies, this doll is dressed and undressed, bathed and perfumed. For five days her hair is washed each day with henna. Her face is painted with an odd and coquettish little design in kohl, and her feet and hands are patterned with a red-brown paste. Her eyes are always closed, and her hands motionless in her lap.

The greatest of the ceremonies for her is the Exhibition of the Bride. On this afternoon she sits in the courtyard, raised on a high chair like a throne, wearing every bit of finery she possesses, while women musicians beat the *darbukeh* and sing alluring songs below the throne and all the feminine half of the village assembles to admire or to gossip about her. Flanking her on each side, on lesser chairs, sit other women in ceremonial robes. The sun beats down on the golden sheets and on the blaze of jewelry; the air is heavy with sweet languid odors; the drums throb insistently; and the crowd of attendant women and children sway back and forth, jostling one another for a glimpse of the bride. It is the peak of pride, the *début* and farewell in one; after the wedding for a whole year the young

wife may not leave the house of her husband on any pretext whatever.

The ceremonies for the bridegroom are held separately, as is fitting. For him getting married is expensive, if not so irrevocable as for the bride. First there is the "bride's dower" to be paid. Theoretically this is a nest egg for her in case he repudiates her later. But in practice it is usually spoken of as the purchase-money. Then there is the bull to be purchased and ceremonially killed; there are the musicians to be hired and his own wedding-clothes to be bought, with jewelry for the bride and a host of other expenses. Once, being curious, I asked my cook—a real chef he was, and a rising young man in the community—how much his wedding had cost him. When my own son marries, I wonder what he will think of the proportion.

"My wife," said Amor the cook, "cost me one thousand francs. I am a poor man and she was not expensive. The bull cost me a thousand more. My clothes and jewelry for her cost fifteen hundred, and five hundred went for the musicians and other things. Five thousand francs it cost me in all, and I was only a house-boy then. This was in the days when a franc was a franc, not the counter it is now. Of course," he added as an afterthought, "I took in a good deal, nearly three thousand francs, so that at the time it cost me only two thousand."

This "taking in" of money is a very forthright and practical custom, by which on important occasions, like weddings and circumcisions, each man of the village contributes something. The amounts are scrupulously written down, and considered as a debt to be repaid on a like occasion to the giver. In this way the expense, spread over a number of years, is made easier to bear.

Never shall we forget our first vivid impression of a ceremony of "taking in"! It was a warm night, clear with a high-

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riding moon. At eleven the drums began. Presently—time is of no consequence in Hammamet—Amor, in a clean brown jerkin with a resplendent green waistcoat and a formal sunburst of jasmine flowers thrust into his red felt hat, came to fetch us. We walked between the cactus hedges of the footpaths and through the white streets of the village, coming ever nearer to the drums. At the gate of the festive house the host greeted us, urging us with formal dignity to enter and leading us to a place of honor.

The courtyard was a large one, lighted by the moon and two hanging lanterns. On benches around the edge and on floor-mats were seated some two hundred Arab men. Their clear-cut faces with high noses and black eyes, having a sheen like red bronze in the lantern-light, had the comfortable look of men who possess their souls without effort. They had sat there motionless for an hour and would probably sit there for hours more.

Behind them the white walls of the courtyard were broken by decorative doorways leading into the rooms of the house. The doors were outlined in bright tiles bearing arabesque designs. Above them, on the low roof of the house, sat the women, indistinguishable brown and white shapes, with occasionally the gay-colored scarf of a young girl not yet "locked up." Their faces were scrupulously veiled, and their figures lost in the swaddling garments. Yet no man might raise his eyes to the roof or appear to notice that they were there. Over the white line of the roof hung an end of colored scarf and as the night proceeded a plump little foot drooped down, painted with a design in henna and hung with a silver anklet, the owner of which had fallen asleep.

In the center of the courtyard a space, unexpectedly small, had been left for the musicians, the caller, and the dancers. They are local talent, not half appreciated by the village. It

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frankly prefers the *danse du ventre* of the plump Jewesses imported from Tunis on rare occasions for a rich marriage, like that of the butcher's son. Yet the two slender youths, dressed in blue accordion-plaited skirts, who sang in shrill antiphony, had a quality vastly more subtle and elusive than belongs to those professional vulgarians. They stood almost still when they danced, only springing and turning a little from time to time. Their hands were held quiet in the air before them, and their faces were masks of detachment. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, under the moon and the flickering lanterns, they swayed and swung with the frank directness of a scientist stating a theme. The theme is always a plastic representation of the oriental art of love, but the dancer is apart from his theme, remote and unapproachable as an image of molten metal. Betweenwhiles, when the tambours and the dancing stopped, the caller stepped forward holding in his hand a coin or a bill given by some guest. In a deep chanting rigmarole he called down blessings on the head of the giver. The faces of the men were impassive as before, but from the hidden women on the housetops came sudden applause when the sum warranted it, a high falsetto trilling that pierced the ears.

As such a night wears on, the dances become more and more impassioned. From under the seats and beneath jerkins bottles of liquid are brought forth, in defiance of the Koran—for prohibition seems to have the same result everywhere—and it is well for foreigners to slip away.

When the last rite of the wedding comes, after the bridegroom has been escorted through the village, clipped and oiled like a ceremonial bull, from his official bath, the bride is taken in procession to her new home. Sobbing in earnest now, she walks among the women, swathed in interminable wrappings and wearing beneath them a gold-embroidered veil as stiff as a small board. She is installed on her throne in the

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bridal chamber, while the women wait without in the courtyard. Then the parable is completed. The bridegroom comes. He enters the bride-chamber—and the lighted candle of virginity is passed to the waiting women.

Other parables there are, too, at the weddings. Once we saw a young profligate forcibly ejected from the inner light of merrymaking, because he had drunk wine in the presence of his father and, when warned by a companion, had answered, flushed with spirits, "What do I care for the old man?" When we left nearly an hour later, we saw him in the outer darkness of the street quite literally weeping, wailing, and gnashing his teeth. He had torn great gashes in his face with his nails, and a crowd of beggar children had assembled to watch him curiously.

One evening, returning home at dusk, I met a woman, still young and pretty, but unveiled. Her face was contorted with grief, and as she walked, she also tore her cheeks in long bleeding gashes. With abandon she wailed at intervals, a wail, high-pitched and rhythmical, that seemed to rise out of her own grief into a region of impersonal sorrow. And in the keening, which was half a chant, I heard over and over the word *ouled*, child.

When the blue and salty sea takes to itself one of the fisherfolk—and what family in Hammamet has not lost a son, a father, or a brother?—all night long the women wail in the courtyards, and the men, crouched against the wall of a street, sob quietly with covered heads. In the concerted grief of the women is a curious formalism, a quality of ceremony, which strikes oddly on our ears. The women stand in a circle in the courtyard, their hair streaming, their clothes dishevelled, their faces torn. One woman leads with praises of the deceased. "He was so good!" she cries, and the others answer with a triple wordless wail, piercing and rhythmic, that is somewhat like

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the crying of a dumb animal for its stricken young, somewhat like the responses of a congregation on Good Friday, and somewhat like the cheering of a football crowd when the game is going against them. "He was so just!" And again the women wail, rocking themselves backward and forward, stamping their feet in unison. So they continue the night through. But in the morning, when the time to refrain from weeping has come, suddenly they all cease and with perfect self-possession resume the fatalistic, almost stoical attitude that is characteristic of their everyday life.

In Hammamet the women used to follow the funeral processions to the little straggling graveyard beyond the walls, where the dead are laid in the sand, coffinless, wrapped in a new piece of linen and covered with a nameless mound. But their grief grew too terrible for the men to endure; so now they are forbidden this last lugubrious rite and the body, borne on its stretcherlike bier, is followed only by the chanting Imam, sometimes the Aissaouai, and a crowd of men and boys. Or if the deceased is a child—infant mortality is pitifully high—the little body is carried in the arms of the undertaker, who is also a sort of lay priest, and followed by a man or two chanting verses from the Koran.

But weddings and funerals, those searching highlights of existence, were not more enthralling to us than the daily lives of the people. Even the traffic that passed our garden-gate had about it a quality of unreality which time could not lessen. Every evening before dusk, when our day's task was done, the pageant renewed itself, like a dream repeated so often that its outlines are recognized and yet never familiar.

There were the demure Arab maidens of eight or ten—grave and warm as spring pansies, which open early in this land of sunshine—already being prepared for their lifelong incarceration in the harems. They rode by on donkeys, wrapped in gay-



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colored scarfs, and as they rode, sitting sidewise on the striped cloth that serves as saddle, they kicked their little brown feet so that their anklets tinkled and chirped a soft rolling "r-r-r-r-r-r!" to hasten their steeds. There were too the old crones, who being no longer desirable, achieve liberty in place of love, and move about unveiled as they will. They usually go afoot and walk with a sort of jog-trot. Their faces are sometimes very beautiful, as the faces of old American Indian braves are beautiful.

There were the groups of young men, sauntering by arm in arm, with flowers in their red felt hats like flat fezzes, singing and joking as they went. Beyond us, we knew, they would stop at the café and, seated lazily on the mats before the door, would drink coffee and smoke for long nonchalant hours. There were the old men, with faces of quiet assurance, riding with unconquerable dignity on asses that paced through the dust. There was the old Jew, in his patriarchal striped robe with its high head-dress, and one-eyed dirty Abs the water-carrier, so old and wandering in his wits that he was admitted, the only man, into the Mussulman houses in the absence of the lord and master. Or sometimes a rich man, resplendent in a *jebba* of crushed-raspberry-colored silk, passed, his horse covered with a carpet from Kairouan.

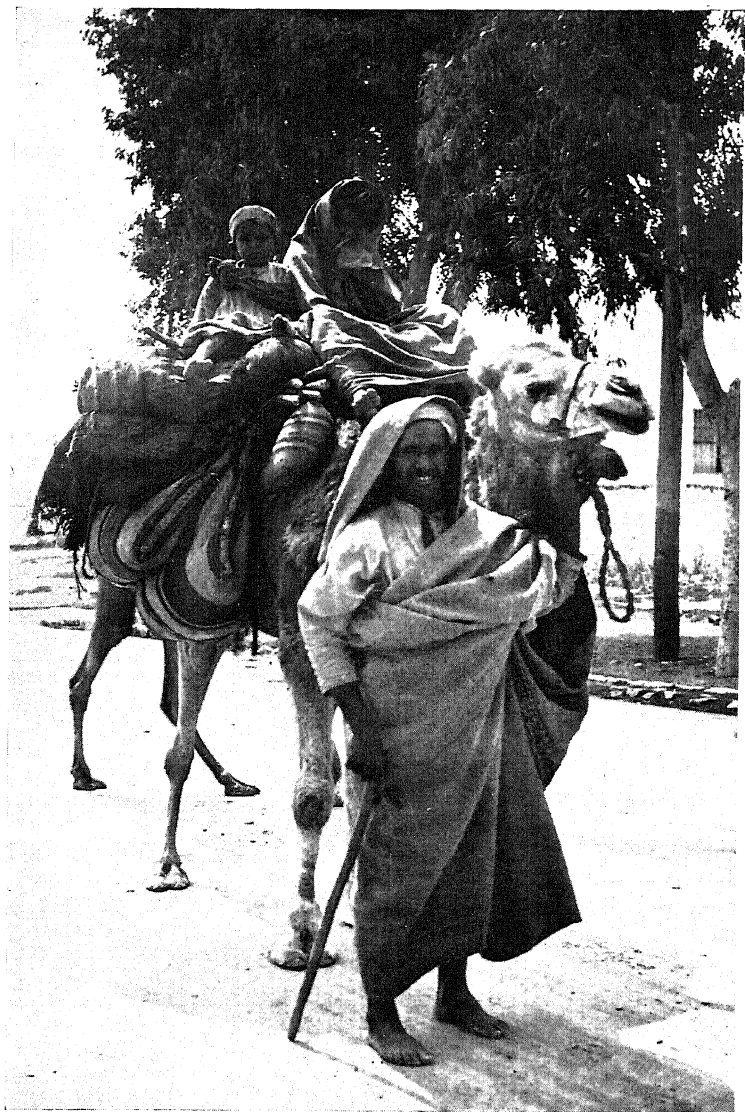
There were also now and then the colonials. *Monsieur le Curé* went past with his stooping walk, tall, cadaverously thin, seeming already half in the world to come, the world where he longs to be. He was shot nearly to pieces twice in the World War, and he works here because here what is left of him can still labor for his Lord. Sometimes Dr. Eichmuller, the Danish doctor, passed, a humorous grizzled man who winters in Tunis and summers here. He told me that I idealized the Arabs, and he recounted unbelievable tales, comic and pathetic, about their ideas of medical practice and their fatalistic attitude.

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But I noticed that he spared himself nothing to care for them. Occasionally M. Jossot, the French painter, bicycled past, he who has become a Sufi and has also an Arabic name, or the Italian composer of lovely melodic music, who has a delightful American wife, and who loves the Arabs with a love that has endured many trials. And there were beautiful Italian children, whose parents own olive and orange groves, and plump little colonial Frenchmen with great mustaches, who are putting science into the reclaiming of the sandy soil. And there was one "hard-boiled" French colonial planter who said constantly, "*Un Arabe est pire qu'un chien*," and who lived in Hammamet because he made money there. But these people are an incident as we are, an alien element, foreign to the soil, who though they work here, depend elsewhere in spirit. They are so few that they hardly touch the town.

Past our door also went the Bedouins, walking as free things walk, tirelessly, ripplingly. They had come north looking for food, because of a great drought in the south. They have never enough to eat. Their long lean bodies have not an ounce of unnecessary flesh, and their white woolen garments, which make such magnificent gestures, are always dirty and ragged. But they are free. They have a morality all their own, which causes endless trouble to the settled town and country folk. But I think that, if liberty were all I had, I too should take the necessities of life where I found them, without too much thought for the laws of property—or of sanitation.

There were also the camels! "Seeing," they tell me, "is believing." But I swear to you that it is not so. To see camels is for me, as for the New England farmer, to remain thoroughly incredulous. How many times have I watched them coming home at dusk, outlined against the darkening sea, throwing their long legs anywhere, anyhow, so that their forked footprints are never twice the same, holding balanced their



PART OF THE TRAFFIC THAT PASSED IN HAMMAMET:  
BEDOUINS ON THE MARCH

(Photo by Head)



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unbelievable necks and smiling a cryptic far smile! Even with our own particular beast, who plowed indifferently in the garden behind the villa and stabled in the barn, or permitted us under protest to ride him, as a philosopher might permit himself to be ridden and yet hold no traffic with the rider—even with him I never came to feel familiarity; or with the patient blindfold giant who spent his life walking round and round on the roof of the *hammam*, to draw water for the bathers. He was taken up there when still a calf, up a stairway that he can now never pass again, being twice its size. When he dies, his body will be thrown off the roof. He has a savage three-cornered bite that takes the flesh out with it and a snort of protest that can be heard for blocks. Yet though I know these things, I am still incredulous.

Once when there came a strange epidemic to Hammamet that killed the camels by the twenties, a French veterinary surgeon was sent for from Tunis. Usually, since a camel is worth so little in money, no effort is made to save it. But this time matters were serious. The surgeon shook his head. "A camel," said he, "is an antediluvian beast, left over from some earlier world. We do not know his wellspring nor his diseases. We can do little for him. Nevertheless I will try." But the camels continued to die by the twenties. The Arabs dragged their dead bodies away to the oueds, the dry beds of streams that flow only two or three days a year and then are rushing torrents. And all winter long the yapping howls of the jackals came to the folk in the village.

Winter is the rutting season, and then the camels become really dangerous at times. The red bladder, like a second tongue, which they thrust out from their mouths, froths into foam like soapsuds, and a deep bubbling roar, like the bubbling of demoniac chasms of the underworld, comes from their throats. Just why the sound is so irresistibly comic I do not

know. But there is only one thing funnier, I believe, and that is a *combat de chameaux*, a camel-fight, which the Arabs hold for amusement, muzzling the animals so that they cannot seriously injure each other and inciting them to rage with a perpetual annoyance of flute and drum. The two combatants fall to it like human wrestlers, striving to throw each other, knocking out each other's legs and butting with their great necks, amid shrieks of delighted laughter from the audience.

I may laugh at them never so much; yet the next time I see one outlined against the darkening sea the same sense of mystery and wonder comes over me. I have seen them in the bitter cold or jagged mountain ranges in northern China, lying in the market places of Peking, placidly munching cactus in Kairouan—spines and all, quite undisturbed by inch-long spikes that pierce tongue and lips—sauntering under enchanted tourists in the oases and plodding under predatory Bedouins in the sun of the Sahara. But I cannot reconcile myself to them. They are alien everywhere, something not of our day, comic and mysterious, smiling and scornful, inscrutable as is the very earth itself.

With the other animals that passed our door and that formed fully half the traffic, we felt more at home. The scrawny North African cattle, the brown sheep with their fat tails, the goats, the patient donkeys—with these we were familiar, or thought we were. Yet from these also we were to receive a sense of haunting strangeness and beauty.

One evening we had climbed, the four of us, into the ring of bare brown hills that lies behind the village. A white marabout stands there, the grave of some hermit saint. We had watched curiously while four veiled women had come up from the houses below, carrying oil for the little lamp that stands in the protection of a jutting ledge and food for the spirit of the sage. They kissed the whitewashed lintel reverently and

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murmured prayers under their breath. Then they went slowly down again, looking back at the little fire near by, where we were boiling water for tea, and obviously wondering whether we contemplated sacrilege.

Afterward we climbed still higher among the hills. The wind that springs up at dusk hustled us on the heights, and the calm blue sea below us ruffled and grew dark. Suddenly the hills, which had been bare and empty, grew alive with flocks returning to the fold. From every direction they came, the cattle and the goats, the ridiculous stiff-legged lambs, still gambolling as they went, and the serious worried-looking sheep. On all the stones fell the patter of sharp little hoofs, and the Arab boys herding them hallooed in high sweet voices. We turned backward with them in the gathering dusk, feeling very close to the miracle of earth.

As we reached the first level below the hills, we came upon a great flock of sheep, many hundreds of them standing quietly together. Three Bedouins were herding them, and they had joined forces for company's sake during the day. Now they went among the sheep, moving quickly yet carefully, in order not to startle the flock, their white robes flowing about their lean figures and their faces quietly intent. They were dividing the sheep into three smaller flocks, cutting out this one, sending that one yonder. As they moved, they stooped in the deepening dusk and looked, not at any mark or brand, but into the faces of the sheep, finding them long familiar. There came to me then the voice of one who long ago had known such bare hills and such patient homing flocks: "As the shepherd knoweth his sheep . . ."

A great peace came to us in Hammamet. Under the trivial happenings of our daily lives it flowed like a silent river. We were no longer at variance with the earth, conquering her, living apart from her. Some force flowed from these people to

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us, these people who themselves seemed like moving bits of the earth. It is as if the earth breathed them out of herself and they moved about for a space on her bosom, laughing and laboring and loving. Then one evening when the sun sets red behind the mountain of Zaghuan, or one morning when the dawn pales the blazing stars, she breathes them in again, silently, inevitably. They lie down in the sand, not separated even by the walls of a coffin, and nestle in the body of the earth and move no more. Why should they fear, or why should they mourn the loved ones who are gone? Allah has spoken, and they are part of the eternal energy at the center of creation. Whoso struggles in the fear of death, let him go to Hammamet and be at peace.



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## 15

### South Mountain Road

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OUR stay in Hammamet prolonged itself from the original six weeks we had planned for our spiced dessert, until it covered the winter, a winter of gay insouciance and hard work. I was so amused that I deserted my own field of writing and collaborated with Cloyd in a comedy which we originally called *Mabouba*, but which later acquired the name *Arabesque*. It was a light comedy of manners, the manners of the village Arabs among whom we were living. We put into it our amusement and our affection for these people, and we spent a large part of our working time laughing. The play was finished before we left.

When we returned to America in the spring we decided, greenhorns that we were, that we would live near New York for the summer and sell this comedy. When I think of the thousands of hopeful playwrights who have tried this scheme without success, I realize how brash we were. But Providence sometimes takes the trusting innocent under her protection. The scheme worked. .

So we went out to the country, to Rockland County, New York, and rented a house on South Mountain Road. And there little by little we became aware that chance had set us down in an environment which fitted us like a glove. It an-

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swered some obscure need which had never before been met.

We found there a group of people—creative artists, nearly all of them—who were reproducing in America very much what the groups of early Italians of the Renaissance were doing in their own time and place. They were creating a strong local center of art, varied yet somehow unified, rooted on the one hand in the soil and on the other in the best traditions of artistic integrity. These people all lived very simply, grubbing in their gardens, taking part in the life of the country, often doing their own housework. Their pleasures were gay and simple. Yet they worked unflaggingly, with single-hearted devotion. And from this center went out invisible streams of influence that reached to the far corners of the country. Some of the best plays on Broadway were written here; excellent poetry, novels, and literary criticism came from this source; practically every art exhibit of any importance featured something painted or carved here; the handicrafts, wood-carving, furniture making, gesso work, pottery, hammered metal, painted or batiked materials, went out through the country in exhibits or commercially; some of the most effective of the new silk designs used by the big silk houses were done on the Road; the exhibitions of modern design for houses, including furniture, hangings, model rooms and modernistic decorating, all contained examples produced here. A list of the accomplishments of the Road as a whole would fill innumerable pages.

With it all, the life of the Road was that of a happy community, a community held together by similarity of ideals, and by the difficulties and amusements of living under very primitive surroundings. The great beauty of the countryside added to the pleasure. And by the alchemy of serious intent, that faddishness which has ruined so many somewhat similar communities in this country was conspicuously lacking.

## SOUTH MOUNTAIN ROAD

We were fortunate in being taken in at the source; for the founder of the artistic colony, still one of its presiding geniuses, is Mary Mowbray-Clarke, formerly of the Sunwise Turn Bookshop in New York. And it was Mary's house, The Brocken, which we had by chance rented. The Brocken is quite famous in its way. It is an ancient farmhouse, built before the Revolutionary War, and now remodelled by the real genius of its owner. Certain modern conveniences have been added, but it keeps its ancient character intact. We have lived in it for several summers, and although I still think its main outline ugly, I love every weathered board in it. It stands in the middle of eighty acres of rolling country, fields, now gone to seed, woods, and meadows. A pretty brook meanders through the grounds.

The Brocken was discovered by Mary and her sculptor husband Mowbray-Clarke, who moved into it very many years ago. They had a large friendship among artists and literary people, and the open house they kept there attracted others to the countryside and so started the colony. By the time we arrived, Mowbray had eloped with a pupil, leaving Mary and her young son Bothwell—familiarly known as Bumper—then a mere lad, more recently one of the engineers on Wake Island for the transpacific air route. Mary was operating the bookshop in New York and used to depart for town every day, winter and summer, at seven in the morning, returning after six at night. Bothwell also was away all day in winter, at school. How these two, the woman and the little boy, managed to keep the place going at all has always been a mystery to me. Living conditions were as primitive as they must have been in pre-Revolutionary times. We had to fetch water that first summer from a limpid spring down the hill. There was no plumbing of any sort. The roof leaked, and the lane to the Road, a quarter of a mile long, was all but impassable. These things have all been fixed now, but somehow I almost regret

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the fact. There was a quality to the old Brocken which caused us to fall in love with it immediately and permanently. Even today I still put myself to sleep sometimes by going over in my mind each separate flower in the garden which I tended with such affection.

But the place itself is inseparable to me from its owner. Mary is a wiry little person with masses of hair now turning a live gray, as live as herself. Her appetite for life is insatiable and her vitality such as no longer exists in our century of ease and comfort. I remember that one piercingly cold rainy November day there was some slip-up about Bothwell's meeting her at the station and she finally arrived long after dark, having first walked miles in the rain and being soaked through every fiber of her clothing, then ridden more miles in an open car in this condition, and then walked some more. Any other woman I know would have taken pneumonia, but Mary only remarked the next day that her nose was a little stuffy! The last time I saw her she was making a park for the town of New City, bossing twenty-five men, standing on her feet all day long and as chipper as a sparrow. And she is far from young.

With all this she is one of the best read women in New York. Her fund of knowledge, both "book learning" and acquired first hand, seems to be inexhaustible and touches on art, philosophy, belles lettres, geology, history, gardening, the building trades, and God knows what besides. I notice that she sometimes tells the same story in several different ways, but what of that? I am glad to have known Mary Clarke. She restores one's belief in the potentialities of the human race.

At The Brocken we discovered that various old friends were living in the colony. Michael Carmichael Carr was there, constructing sets and properties for the New York theatrical world. So were Carroll and Loretto French whom we had known in the old Chicago Little Theatre days, Carroll now

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making wood carvings. And Hermann Rosse and his family lived only a little way through the woods.

The Rosse family really made a fabulous world in themselves. They are Hollanders, Hermann an artist who includes most phases of the visual arts in his gigantic scope, and Helena his wife, who belongs to the ancient Dutch "guild of the digger," a landscape gardener. They are both over-life-size in vitality, and Helena at least in physique. She is like one of those great glorious statues of Juno come alive. During the *Nativity Pageant* in Chicago we had come to know them well. The first time I went to their house in Ravinia I thought I had strayed into some old-world fairy-tale. They had five children then, husky youngsters with great clubs of yellow braids or bushes of black hair, spouting vitality like their parents, but quiet and self-controlled as European children are. At table Helena served a steak big enough to feed an army, great mounds of mashed potatoes and vegetables. There was also a vast pitcher of milk, and each child rose in his turn, grasping a pewter mug, and went to have it filled. The combination of rustic simplicity and intellectual awareness was irresistible.

Later Hermann and Helena fell into a discussion as to how many children they should have.

"Twelve," said Helena.

"Six!" said Hermann, adding: "I am an artist. I should not be required to support more than six."

"Twelve!" said Helena imperturbably.

Hermann must have lost, for they have nine now, perhaps more; I have not heard from them since they returned to Europe.

Helena's children come as easy to her as cooking a dinner to most of us. One of them was born one summer while I was at The Brocken. A child came running through the woods to

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say that father had gone to fetch the doctor and would I come and sit with mother till he got back. I found that Helena had just finished the family washing and was then sweeping the floor. She sat down to chat with me as calmly as though nothing were afoot. When the nurse arrived the patient insisted on making coffee for her and me! After a while she said she thought she would go upstairs and lie down. I took the occasion to run home through the woods and excuse myself to guests of my own. I was gone not more than twenty minutes at most, probably less. When I got back the doctor had arrived, and so had the baby. Helena, looking infinitely beautiful and peaceful, told me happily that it was another boy and was to be named Derek Peter.

I shall never forget their departure for Europe one spring, to spend the summer. The flu was then rampant and had been going round the family, striking one child after another and finally Helena herself. So she had not been able to make proper preparations for what was after all a sizable undertaking, with their family. She said to me: "I have long ago stopped trying to get ready. I shall just step on the boat!" A remark which any woman will appreciate.

So one morning I went over to watch her step off. They were not taking the train, but were going down to Newark by taxi. The taxi-driver, a local character who knew them well, had gone over early. He was trying desperately to collect the tribe. When he saw a child wandering around who looked dressed he would corral it, put it in the back of the car and tamp it down with a piece of luggage. Gradually the car filled up to the bursting point. When he finally captured Helena I thought there could be no possible place for her, but he manipulated things till she was sitting, a baby or two on her lap, packed so solid with luggage that there was not literally a cubic inch of space to spare. Hermann was the last and most

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difficult to capture, having gone off in perfect self-possession to take a bath. The taxi man champed with impatience and blew his horn frantically. At last Hermann appeared, as unruffled as a summer pond, climbed in almost on top of the driver. And they were off at at least fifty miles an hour down the country lane. I heard afterwards that they got to the boat as the gangplank was being raised. But I am sure they were both still perfectly calm.

Hermann does more work than four ordinary men, always has a dozen ideas ahead before he can finish one. And he is a genius to boot. Once he won the coveted Hollywood prize for the best designed moving picture, and he has had innumerable other successes. His energy drives him relentlessly. The only time I ever saw Hermann with really work enough to satisfy him was a season when he was designing sets for Balaban & Katz, those gigantic spectacles they used to send around a circuit, each with a number of scenes of lavish extravagance. He was designing and overseeing the construction of one of these shows a week, building a theatre somewhere in New England, and doing a little silk designing on the side. Hermann was blooming then and at peace with the world.

But alas, they have left America for good! A university in Holland—at Delft, I believe—had been begging him for years to come back and be professor of art there. But he had refused. Finally a personal letter arrived from the Queen of Holland, asking him to reconsider. Hermann's original background came out then. He could not see that he could possibly have enough to do there, but the honor was not to be resisted. Rather sadly, I thought, they packed up and left us. Nobody can ever fill the empty space that the Rosses left among their friends.

There were others too on South Mountain Road to whom we were soon devoted: Rollo Peters the actor, and his adopted

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mother, Amy Murray, author of that truly charming book, *Father Allan's Island*, and of some sensitive poetry; big Maxwell Anderson the playwright and his wife Margaret; the poet Frank Ernest Hill and his family; Henry Varnum Poor, who made such fascinating pottery in the kiln beside his house, and Bessie Breuer the novelist, whom he has since married; Martha Fulton the silk designer, now the wife of the painter Morris Kantor; Ruth Reeves, another famous silk designer; Jacques Marquis and his wife; the Bruce Christens, and others.

Since that day too Will Hollingsworth the painter and his wife Buckner Kirk have come to live on the Road, thus completing its attraction for us. For they were both our friends from away back and each, before meeting the other, had visited us in Europe, Bill in Venice and Buckner in Settignano. No better friends can be imagined.

Not so far away too, at Sneden Landing, live during the summer the Lemuel Partons, once of San Francisco, vital, deep-feeling people with an irresistible sense of humor. Under the spreading grapevine in their arbor, loaded with its green or purple freight, we have had many soul-stirring discussions and endless good talk. Thank God for friends!

We try to manage, even when we cannot spend the summer on the Road, to get there for at least a couple of weeks a year, and we live in hopes of some day accumulating money enough to build a house on the two acres of ground we own next to The Brocken. But somehow, when we do collect a bit of money, we spend it all on going to far places, and so the oaks and tulip trees, the lady slippers and brown-eyed Susans still flourish as they will on our green ridge.

That first summer we waited hopefully while the plays we had written went the rounds of New York managers. And at last one day Hermann Rosse came through the woods to tell us that Norman-Bel Geddes, who then had money from Otto





EDGAR LEE MASTERS IN THE DOORWAY AT THE BROCKEN  
(Photo by Head)



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Kahn to produce several plays on Broadway, had decided on *Arabesque* for his first production and wanted us in town immediately.

Thus began one of the most devastating adventures of our lives.

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## 16

### Devastation on Broadway—*Arabesque*

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WE NATURALLY did not feel devastated, however, that first day, nor for a good while to come. We thought that at last Cloyd's great chance had arrived, and we were walking on air.

We went to town and met Norman Bel Geddes, a blond dynamic young man, very boyish and with a real charm. Our old friend Mrs. Isaacs of *Theatre Arts* had shown him a copy of the play and he was delighted with it. We soon discovered that it was the visual side which attracted him, the possibilities for scenic effects. But he talked quite reasonably about the play, saying that he knew it to be a light comedy which must be delicately done. How often in the sequel we thought of that "delicately"!

Looking back on the whole thing from the perspective of twelve years I can see—what we did not realize in all its implications at the time—that Norman was really as inexperienced in his rôle of dramatic director as we were in ours of playwrights. We were all learning the business together. To be sure Norman was very experienced indeed as a scenic director. He had created the *mise-en-scène* for countless Broadway productions, including *The Miracle*: he knew his lights and movement to the last flicker, and he had created for himself a technical laboratory which quite stunned us by its magnifi-

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cence. And this tended to obscure for us the fact that *Arabesque* was his first production as a dramatic director in America though he had directed one play in Paris for Eva Le Gallienne. Thus the cards were stacked against him, since he knew the visual and technical sides so completely, yet was at the same time a novice where the drama was concerned. And in moments of stress anyone tends to revert to what he really knows and to lose other values.

Norman has since learned the business of directing, and if he had attacked *Arabesque* with the knowledge he now has, the result would have been far different. He must have made great strides even between *Arabesque* and the next play he attempted a year or two later, *Lysistrata*, for although we did not see it, being off somewhere on our travels, we were told that the play came through the production quite clearly. Cloyd Head and I were simply unfortunate enough to supply the text from which he learned his lesson.

But to return to those days. Norman told us about the financial set-up. Certain crowd movements which he had designed for *The Miracle*, together with other things, had convinced Otto Kahn that Norman had the makings of a dramatic director. Kahn had therefore agreed to give him ninety thousand dollars to try himself out in the new field. With this he was to produce three plays. At Mr. Kahn's request he had tied up with an old dyed-in-the-wool theatrical manager, Richard Herndon, in the firm of Geddes and Herndon for the occasion. Now *Arabesque* was to be their first production, the cost to be limited to thirty thousand dollars. Just how much it finally cost we never knew.

Norman was already at work on the designs. He had visualized the eight scenes of the play all in one set with movable units, and Cloyd was alight with the idea. Cloyd is definitely a modern in his artistic leanings and here was something that

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satisfied one side of him, though even then the director in him—he is now one of the finest and most sensitive of directors himself—told him that the set would be too heavy for the show. Also, although the scenes had been written in the usual manner as separate entities each closed by a curtain, with time lapses between them, Norman saw them all together as one flowing panorama. We could not see that the audience could bridge the time gaps. But in our enthusiasm we passed these things over and hoped for the best.

Things progressed in a lather of excitement. The show was to go forward at once. We hired a woman to stay at The Broken with Janet and Marshall, as the children could not have managed alone, and Cloyd and I moved to the Shelton in town.

Norman felt that the play was underwritten and wanted us to lengthen it, so we set to work at once. When we had been at it for some time Richard Herndon called us into his office, told us he did not like the play as well as Norman did and had now persuaded Norman to drop the whole affair. We were flabbergasted, but not yet defeated. So we proceeded to struggle with Herndon. It was a difficult session, but we finally persuaded him to let us try to rewrite the play to suit him. We girded up our loins, ordered in coffee and sandwiches, and in two days had written in two new scenes. Both Norman and Herndon thought they improved the script greatly. We got the contract.

I remember very well the day the contract was finally signed and we received our check for five hundred dollars advance royalties. It was all we ever did get, but we didn't know that then. Nevertheless we could see dimly what we were in for, and we stood on the steps of the Public Library at Forty-second Street in a depression as blue as midnight. Then suddenly the difference between our dreams of how we should feel

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with our first Broadway contract in our pockets and the way we did actually feel, struck us both at the same moment and we burst into hysterical laughter. We laughed till we cried and marched off arm in arm up the street, still shrieking with laughter. I don't believe we really laughed again for many months.

It will be necessary here, I think, to tell something of the play itself. It was, as I have said, a light comedy of manners, the tight strict manners of a country village among the Tunisian Arabs, and the smallness of the locale was as necessary to it almost as it is to hut drama. As for the play's merits, who knows what they were? Certainly not I. It was not an important play, and we never thought it was, but it had a certain charm and an amusing plot. The writing had some good points and some bad ones. Several people who knew their theatre liked it in the original script. The Lewisohns' Neighborhood Playhouse, of blessed memory, was teetering on the edge of accepting it when Norman took it. Nobody liked it in the production—ourselves least of all. Norman, I think, later regretted that he had taken it, though he never said so to us—which was decent of him. As a matter of fact, if by some prescience we could have seen the production first we might have written a play that would have dominated it, something with strong simple situations and violent action. But by the time we saw the production it was too late to change the almost intimate values of the play. In the rewriting we broadened it as much as we could, but this was not enough. One of our unfulfilled hopes is to see *Arabesque* put on some day in such a form that we can judge it as a play.

The leading character, almost a stellar rôle as we had written it, was a laughter and tears part for a middle-aged comedienne, Mabouba. (Norman soon reduced Mabouba to what was practically comic relief.) The leading man was a young

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village Arab named Ahmed, and opposite him was the ingénue, named M'na, an innocent village maiden, daughter of Mabouba. There was also a "hot" pair, the Sheik of the town and a Bedouine desert girl whom we conceived as a tiger cat. The rest were village people and Bedouins. In all, with some misgivings about the number, we had written about thirty parts, most of which were crowd and non-speaking.

Norman was not at all satisfied that we had so few people. "Two Bedouins are not enough for an encampment," he exclaimed. "We will have four. And the crowd is far too small."

By this time we were really getting under weigh. The cast was chosen little by little. Our best known player was Bela Lugosi, now of the movies, then recently over from Budapest where he had been a leading tragedian. He played the Sheik. For Ahmed we had Curtis Cooksey, a capable player and a good fellow. M'na was played by Sara Sothern, a splendid little actress who delighted Cloyd and me by her sensitive playing and her deep feeling. The Bedouine was played by Hortense Alden, and Mabouba, after many try-outs, was given to Olive West. About the middle of rehearsals we were told that the small part of the Caïd, who appeared only in the last scene, had been given to Etienne Girardot, of *Charley's Aunt* fame, now also in the movies, and that we should build up the part for him.

Norman had hired the National Theatre on Forty-first Street. The stage proved to be too small to suit him, and before we were through he had torn out the first two rows of seats and had built an apron which extended out into the audience. On this stage he built a permanent set. It was a marvel of ingenuity and beauty. It had innumerable ways of getting up and down it, to the roof-tops or the western hills; it became in turn a bedroom, a street, a courtyard, a corner of the desert, a café,



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or whatever else we might have thought of. And it was for an intimate comedy!

Rehearsals began. It seemed to us that half the extra people in New York were disposed about the stage. There were sixty-four in the cast, of whom sixteen were the principals and speaking parts as we had originally written the play. For the production Norman had asked for the introduction of a number of minor parts. The opening scene was a crowd scene in which almost all the extras as well as the principals appeared, and he was at once occupied with the technical difficulties of disposing them about the stage, showing them when and how to move and when to speak their lines. Extra people have little training, and it took a number of rehearsals to teach them these things. The first rehearsals seemed to set the key for them all. Norman's wonderfully developed visual sense seemed to dominate him throughout. The movement and the stage pictures received endless attention, but we felt that the drama was neglected. Somehow there didn't seem to be time for it. The actors floundered hopelessly and came to us for help in their rôles. At first we tried to help them, to tell them at least who these people were in the civilization they were portraying, and what the lines meant. We never tried to interfere in the direction itself. But we soon had to give up even this. With growing helplessness we watched the dramatic line of the play slowly but surely submerged, drowned in scenery and mechanics, lost forever. Before the end of rehearsals nobody except ourselves seemed even to remember that there was a story hidden somewhere. No, that is not quite exact. Bela Lugosi realized it and tried to help, and so did Sara Sothern and Curtis Cooksey. But they were as helpless as we were.

Norman was a dynamo of energy, a driving force like a tornado. He labored night and day. He accomplished prodigies

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of work. He hired more people. We finally had five stage managers and assistants, in addition to the light men and the stage hands. And even they sometimes tripped up.

As for us, we were soon blind with weariness and broken in spirit. I dare say that now we could manage the situation, but then it floored us. Norman demanded countless changes. We had expected to rewrite, and we felt that some of the first work we did distinctly improved the play. But the rewriting went on and on, past the point where we had any angle left. What we did towards the last was far worse than nothing. And towards the last too the rewriting was almost entirely on a time basis. One day the play would be twenty minutes too short. By next day we must add so much. One day it was three quarters of an hour too long! So we slashed right and left, only to put much of it back in rehearsal. We would wrap towels about our heads, consume cartons of cigarettes, and make the changes. Remember that we were perfectly green and afraid of losing our chance. The Shelton people came to know that we needed food at nights. Before the restaurant closed at one o'clock they would bring up sandwiches, coffee and drinks. When it grew too late for the sound of our typewriters in the room we would go downstairs and type in the great empty lobbies. Some nights we did not go to bed at all. Some nights we slept three or four hours. And still the nightmare went on.

The actors were half crazy with the constant rearrangement of their lines. Michio Ito, the Japanese dancer who was designing the dances, was crazy also. Ruth Warfield, who wrote the very fine incidental music, was not quite so distracted, but even she was on edge. Norman hurried everybody, drove everybody—and yet by some alchemy of his own remained always like a quite charming small boy riding a horse that was too big for him.

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For ourselves we had long ago given up hope of anything except to see it through to an end somehow. At first we fought Norman, alternately or together, after rehearsals and seemed sometimes to win. But by the next day he had always forgotten what he had promised to do. It would have taken another hurricane to divert him from the coming disaster, and we were no hurricane, only two hopelessly confused and tired people.

I remember that one day towards the last we seriously considered trying the law on him and seeing whether we could not get an injunction restraining Norman from putting on the play as it was then going. I don't know whether the law gives succor to harassed playwrights. I dare say not. We never even got to applying for it, and it was Michio Ito who dissuaded us. He is a true artist, Michio, sensitive and understanding. He saw what was happening to the play and to us, and he came to us and volunteered to make Norman see what he was doing. He talked of mountains and stars and the great traditions of art, things whose very existence we had forgotten. We nearly cried for relief. But although Michio tried and Norman, who respected his opinion, told us he understood, nothing came of it.

The rehearsals lengthened from four weeks to five. Norman had had to have the play declared a spectacle to do this, or the Actors' Equity would have forbidden it!

Among all our horrors the last scene came to be the worst. This tenth scene, intended to be a short wind-up, was the least well written of the play. It had never been good and we knew it, but it was nowhere near so bad in the script as it turned out in the production. By the time we had rewritten it six separate times, in the then state of our nerves, and had put in a completely farcical character which had nothing to do with the play for Etienne Girardot—whom we liked a lot

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personally—and had given him permission to ad lib his farcical inspirations, it became a bedlam, something to be seen in maudlin. The call of the muezzin, with which we ended it, became a final sacrilege.

The scene began all right in the script; it was only later that it petered out. It represented the little market place in the village and opened on a dark stage. As the production finally turned out the scene showed at least the market place of Baghdad in the days of Haroun al-Rashid. Indeed the whole thing reeked of the *Arabian Nights*, something we had carefully avoided in the script, for we felt that one of the play's chief values lay in its authenticity and the reality of its present-day manners. In the half-light of dawn Mabouba was intended to be discovered on an empty stage wailing and lamenting and speaking lines absolutely essential to the plot. The shop-keepers were then to appear one by one and the little market place to awaken for the day. Then came the rest of the action.

In the final scene Mabouba was discovered on stage, but she was seated half a mile back, dressed in black and as nearly out of sight as possible. And she was kept silent till three dozen people or so were on stage. There was a coppersmith, who opened his shop at once and began to hammer on metal. There was a perfumer, there were dealers in grain, other shop-keepers, and a big wheelbarrow with an octagonal wheel because a round one didn't make noise enough, and everybody knows that the Orient is confused and noisy. There were people beating on drums and a medley of street cries and two or three dozen people wandering about. And last, but far from least, there was the barber. This barber was one of Norman's inventions and a gem in its own way. As I have said, Norman had built an apron which extended into the audience. On this sat a man with his back to the audience, having his hair cut. The extra man who took the part had agreed to have his head

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shaved. Over this Norman had put a specially constructed wig, made in sections. The barber put his hand on the man's head, applied a pair of clippers and pulled off one of the sections. A strip of shaved head appeared. The audience always howled with laughter as each piece came off, and rightly so, for it certainly was funny. But all this time poor Olive West as Mabouba, far back there in the shadows, was trying to make her lines heard. Nobody in the audience seemed even to know she was there.

We made one more effort to avert the *débâcle* towards the last. We demanded a rehearsal for interpretation of the play itself with such vehemence that Norman finally promised us one, after the scenery should have been packed to go to Buffalo where we were to try it on the dog. We knew it was far too late now, but we still hoped wanly that some edges might be smoothed off. After all we had competent players and they were all eager for guidance of some sort.

The afternoon came at last and, on a bare stage, the actors began to play. At first they looked hopefully towards Norman, but he let them run on as they had been doing. Then the press-agent, a very capable woman, came in, sat down and began to talk to him. He was instantly absorbed. The actors ran their lines hopelessly, automatically, to no audience.

Now our agent had written into our contract with Geddes that we were to be allowed to attend rehearsals—sometimes in those days playwrights were thrown out bodily—but we had agreed not to interrupt them, and we had never done so. This afternoon, however, after two or three scenes of the sort, the worm turned. Something burst in my head and I blew. I leaped up, stopped the rehearsal and in a fine rage told Norman that the veriest tyro could tell him that the show was doomed. That startled him. "What do you mean?" he demanded, storm clouds gathering on his boyish brows.

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"There is no drama here, there is no play!" I cried. "There is nothing but mechanics!"

"Do you mean the lines?" he asked.

"The lines are only part of it. There must be a drama, a play, a story, something besides scenery. A plot, a DRAMA!" I was frankly yelling now and Norman yelled back in an equally fine storm. We had it hot and heavy for a moment. He asked me if I was trying to tell him his business, suggested the probable fate of butt-in-skies and finally ordered me out of the theatre.

I did not go of course, being protected by the contract, but I was beaten, too tired and hopeless to fight any more. I sat down again and the actors recommenced. Norman watched them idly. Then he began to talk to the press-agent again. He did not even notice when they came to an end.

I know now that Norman was genuinely outraged. From his point of view he had "taken a play which he liked, written by two novices in the theatre and was giving it a production. Upon finding it slighter than he thought, he was at the last minute trying to bolster it." In his experience he had no concept of what was happening, nothing with which to understand what I was trying to say. Hence his wrath. After twelve years it is easy to understand, but at the time . . .

The next day we started for Buffalo, a whole trainload in ourselves. We were now booked by Mr. Herndon as a spectacle. We had sixty-four in the cast, an assistant director, twelve musicians, and five stage managers. Our scenery filled a baggage car.

At last the first night came and the show went on before an audience. Cloyd and I tried to detach ourselves and to see what our "delicate" little egg had really hatched out. The mechanics creaked a bit, but they marched. To be sure the elderly woman who played Halima, the matchmaker, got lost some-

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where on the great dark upper reaches of the stage and wandered about desperately, up stairways and down, calling M'na like a lost cuckoo. To be sure also in the last scene somebody gave the wrong cue and the whole ghastly thing went round again for at least five minutes—but no, I believe this was in the New York première! I no longer remember the details of the nightmare clearly. But at least the show began and ended in a blaze of lights, music and spectacular effects.

Visually it was beautiful beyond belief. Never had we seen anything so beautiful! The shapes, the lighting, the movement, the groupings, the colors, the folds and sweep of the costumes, these things passed in a pageant of delight. Norman was already a great genius in his own field. If visual beauty alone could make the theatre, *Arabesque* would have been the success of the century.

We took comfort in that. And on the first night in Buffalo we found another crumb of comfort in the fact that in places the play still showed through. Most of it was already lost, but in the more intimate scenes, where only two or three people were on the stage, one could still see the play. Sara Sothorn as the innocent little M'na was especially moving. Bela Lugosi had authority and power. Curtis Cooksey as Ahmed was effective. Cloyd and I felt that we had written a little white gazelle and that Norman had caparisoned it as an Indian maharajah caparisons his elephants, had put a howdah atop it with beautiful girls swaying in the breeze. All that we could see of our gazelle was a tiny hoof now and then—but we could still see so much. We hoped dully that this, added to the beauty, would be enough. The Buffalo papers were wildly enthusiastic. We slept.

But more was to come. By the next day the process of disintegration of what remained of the play had already begun. Our struggles with Norman, those of Michio Ito and of Bela

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Lugosi, had at last persuaded him that the show was incoherent. Something out of the muddle must be pointed up, given prominence. Suddenly he took hold of the play and tried to shape it, and it was here, in my estimation, that he made his biggest mistake of all as a director. He misjudged the emphasis. Instead of pointing up the main plot, which concerned M'na and Ahmed, he decided to throw the emphasis to the secondary story of the Bedouine and the Sheik—a slender story incapable of carrying the show, but which Norman thought would please by being made extremely hot.

He began with Sara Sothern who played M'na. He took her to task at rehearsals before the whole cast and told her that her performance was terrible. She was a sensitive child and she shrivelled under it. She lost her authority, the sensitive beauty of her performance waned and sickened. She became hesitant and no longer held her audiences.

And as M'na was undermined the Bedouine was given prominence. She remained on set long after she should have made her exit. When she had a line to speak nobody was allowed even to breathe behind scenes, so thoroughly was the confusion stopped. Bela Lugosi, playing opposite her, whose natural authority had shown through consistently despite the lack of direction, was reduced to a mere foil for her, a nothing. Only when she was off stage was he permitted to act as his talent dictated. Thus the last minute direction only served to throw the whole play even more hopelessly out of focus. The show became scenery—and Hortense Alden. The poor girl could not carry it, though she tried hard enough, because her part was not fundamentally the leading rôle. Moreover the Bedouine should have been hard and savage and passionate, a tiger cat. It seemed to us that Hortense played her as a lascivious kitten. We had written her love scene with the Sheik with the greatest care, to suggest the heat of the desert, but not to dwell on



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it. It was to be short and poetic in key, a quick hot stab, a spot of color in the general tapestry. Norman lengthened it out of all proportion, and he added to our carefully balanced and poetic prose several lines so suggestive that they distressed us immeasurably.

By the time that the week was up in Buffalo and the three days in Syracuse the mechanics had been perfected, the beauty heightened, and all that remained of the play totally lost.

We returned to New York, where we were to have four days of rehearsal in the National Theatre before the opening.

At last came the first night, October 20, 1925, one of the most brilliant that New York has ever seen, a landmark of beautiful ineptitude in the annals of the American theatre, the high-spot of that era in which the scenic director threatened to ruin the theatre forever. For Norman was not the only one of them to err then; he was only the one who perceived most clearly what the advances in stage technique could do for the visual stage, and least clearly how it might kill the drama. The seats had been priced at five dollars and a half for the run, but they sold at huge prices for the opening. Everybody was there, every sophisticate in New York. Everyone wanted to know what Norman could do as a director. The papers had been full of us for weeks.

I remember very little of it; only that Maxwell Anderson sat beside me, his quiet understanding somehow helping me in my agony, and that Anne Sell came by, looking infinitely beautiful in a white and silver gown.

The play began. It unfolded its fabulous incoherent beauty like one of those brilliantly colored dreams that seem to have meaning and have not, that shift and circle, twisting between sense and non-sense. Every time a connecting link should have been made, it fell away into shimmering loveliness of movement and light. The mind slipped, caught for a brief moment

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and then slipped again, drowned in the sensuous beauty. The audience sat as under a hypnotic spell, like confused dreamers.

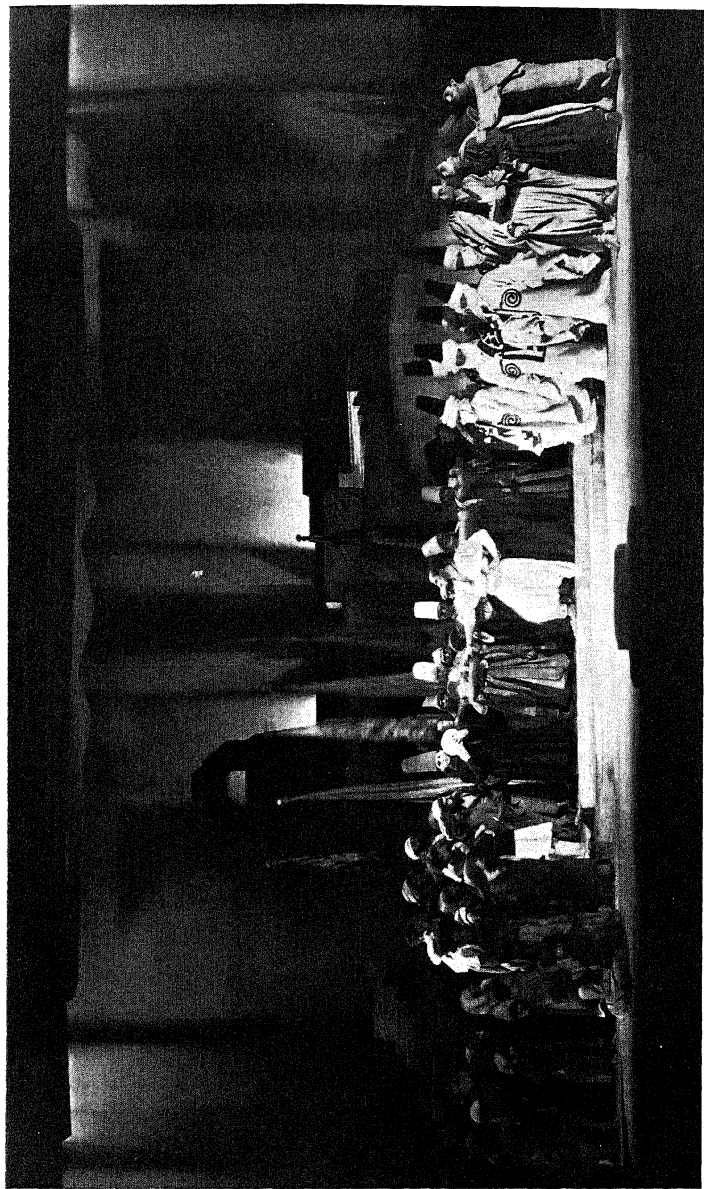
When it was all over there were wild shoutings and calls. John Powell, the pianist, climbed up on the platform and shot through the curtains. In an instant Norman appeared, holding a fire-extinguisher. Everyone in the audience stayed to see and to shout, milling forward about the stage. Norman, his hair and clothes rumpled, looking more like a little boy than ever, made believe to squirt the extinguisher and beamed. Then he quieted the audience and very thoughtfully looked for us to introduce us. How often in nightmares have I lived through that moment again! The sudden stopping of all that noise and acclamation; the circle of curious faces turned towards us coldly; the faint polite spattering of handclapping, and then the roar again as they returned to Norman. Even today when I am tired I sometimes live through it again.

Presently I turned to Maxwell Anderson. "Will it go, Max?" I asked him. He smiled comfortingly. "A little!" he said.

Otto Kahn had come to a dress rehearsal and had looked at us with a cold and fishy eye. He was not a theatrical man and he blamed us, I suppose. We did not see him on the first night. But after the show someone introduced us to Alexander Woollcott, then the bellwether of the New York critics. He understood. He looked at us commiseratingly. "Dear, dear!" he clucked. "That was a terrible experience, wasn't it?" Then he hastened away to write his review.

We were too beaten down to celebrate in the classic manner. We returned to the hotel with my sister Peg, who had come to New York to see the event, drank a little champagne dispiritedly in a vain gesture and fell into bed.

Next morning came the reviews. Woollcott first. He wise-cracked. "You know me, Al-lah," seemed to be his text. It was a full column of mingled praise and roast, praise for the scenic



A SCENE FROM NORMAN BEL GEDDES' PRODUCTION OF *Arabesque*  
Bela Lugosi in center; Curtis Cooksey near right in costume with many folds.



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effects, roast for the direction. At the very end, in two lines, he referred to us with perfect understanding which won our everlasting gratitude. "Be it recorded," he wrote, "that this reviewer makes no attempt to evaluate the smothered *Arabesque*."

Another paper, I believe it was the *Evening Post*, began with a pseudo-oriental parable. It said in effect: "Once there were two men. One had a needle and one had a haystack. They said, 'Let us put them together.' The haystack was Norman-Bel Geddes' production and the needle was Cloyd Head and Eunice Tietjens' play *Arabesque*. Now nobody can possibly discover what the needle may have been like in the first place, whether it was new and shining, or old and rusty." Gilbert Gabriel also showed perception. So the initiated understood. But the rest of the critics, less perceiving, roasted the play unmercifully. Freed from Norman's hypnotic beauty they saw clearly that there had been no drama as a foundation.

As for the audience . . . About a week later, after one of the performances, John Powell came looking for us. "I want to talk to you," he said. "Something is wrong here. The first time I saw this show I was absolutely carried away by the sheer beauty of it. I have never in my life seen anything so lovely! But when I got home it occurred to me that there had been no plot to the thing, and I wondered why Geddes should have put so much on a play without a plot. So I came again, to see the beauty once more, and to look for a story. I began to see glimmerings. Now I have seen it a third time, and there is a perfectly good plot, a fine one—only one can't find it. Why don't you speak to Geddes about it?"

Others must have felt the same way, for the *Billboard*, usually so wise in matters theatrical, which had said in its first notice, "Movie possibilities—nil," said later, "Movie possibilities—good." But nobody took them up.

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For a week our fate seemed to hang in the balance, financially. But soon we went into the cut-rates, and so slid down to the end. We lasted three weeks. Then the papers announced, "Tomorrow *Arabesque* will be succeeded at the National by *The Gorilla*." So ended one of Broadway's most spectacular failures.

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## 17

### The Slough of Despond

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AFTER that came the Slough of Despond. Cloyd and I were bankrupt—financially, physically, morally and creatively. We could do nothing of any kind, but nothing! We were even too down to face our friends, and we fled away and holed in, with the children, in a rooming-house on the lower east side, near Gramercy Park, leaving no address. We put the youngsters in the Quaker school, the Friends' Seminary—a fine place by the way—and he and I sat around the rooms all day, sighing in great gusts and trying to gather the tattered remnants of ourselves together. I think it is to our credit that we did not take to drink! We were there a whole month before we could get together enough energy to look for a decent place to live.

We felt sorry for Norman too. It was a queer thing about that boy. At times we had been furiously angry with him, angry enough to have cut him into little pieces, but somehow it was impossible for us really to carry rancor. Throughout the whole business he had been so sincere an artist in his own field, and he had worked so desperately hard to make a success of the show! It was only that he could not understand. Now he was as flat as we were, though on a larger scale. The firm of Geddes and Herndon had been dissolved, and he went

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about town like a whipped child, looking seedy and baffled. Even his vast energy was temporarily in abeyance. Later we saw him occasionally, and once he said to me: "Everybody in New York has told me the same thing you told me one day in rehearsal, that there was too much mechanics in the show. I wish I had listened to you then!" It was a small salve on a great wound. But he recovered himself more quickly than we did, and before the end of the winter was going again at something else.

After about a month we moved into a furnished apartment on Bank Street and came slowly out of retirement. Henry Blackman Sell persuaded Cloyd to go to "Philadelphia" Jack O'Brien's place, where Dempsey used to train, and tone himself up physically. It worked out very well and his body soon recovered. But it couldn't help his spirits much.

For myself, I continued to drag along the bottom till some time toward the end of January. Then one day I happened to go to see Leonora Speyer, in her charming house on Washington Square. She took a good look at me and sprang to the rescue. "I have a little apartment in Atlantic City which I always keep open so I can get away when I need it," she said, "with a negro maid to do the cooking. Now you pack a bag and run down there for a few days. You need to be alone."

Blessings on Leonora! I went the next day. It was not too cold there to take long walks along the empty wind-swept beach and watch the giant sea-gulls eating clams. A gull would find a clam as big as a saucer and would seize it in his beak and claws. Then he would fly up thirty or forty feet and drop it, following it down with a lovely swooping flight. On the frozen beach the clam-shell would be broken and the gull would eat the contents. I watched them languidly, and watched the long swell come in over the ocean and the roseate clouds at sunset. For two days I didn't think a thought, only some-



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thing inside me seemed to be gathering itself together. At the apartment the negro maid fed me on chicken with mushrooms and fresh strawberries. And I was beautifully alone.

On the third day I suddenly found the self I had lost. "After all," I said to myself, "what have I to do with the theatre? It is none of my business! I was only trying to help Cloyd in the crazy profession he has chosen. I don't need a hundred thousand dollars, a hundred people, and a vast stage. All I need is a typewriter and a little quiet. I will go back where I belong—to poetry!" It came to me like a revelation, and I started work at once on a long poem which had been in my head to write for some time, *The Man Who Loved Mary*. Before I left there the poem was half done, and I was my own man again.

None the less it was an uneventful winter. Almost the only thing I remember with any clarity was a dinner party we gave on Bank Street, one of those rare and successful parties with no padding, where the separate elements coalesce by alchemy into a whole. It consisted of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Leonora Speyer, Witter Bynner, Elinor Wylie, William Rose Benét, Cloyd, Janet, and I. That was a real evening! If I had a transcript of the talk that night, it would make a permanent refutation of the current idea that the art of conversation has perished from the earth.

On second thought, I do remember one other thing that winter, a remark that Morris Gest made one day. I had been telling him of the villa in Hammamet, so big as to be almost a château, with a garden stretching down to the sea and hedges of roses that bloomed all winter, and a private camel plowing in the garden. I finished by saying: "And do you know how much we paid for it all? Twenty-five dollars a month!" I had told this story before, and everyone else had been thunder-struck by the cheapness. But Morris Gest thrust out his great

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firm lips at me and said, "Well, you paid too much for it, didn't you?" and he was right. Of course we had paid too much. Foreigners always do. But I could see one reason why Gest had reached the top of his profession.

Late in the winter I conceived the idea of my *Poetry of the Orient*, an anthology of the classic secular poetry of the Far and Near East. My publisher liked the idea, and I set to work at once. Most of the exacting work of research was done in the oriental collection in the New York Public Library. That collection is a real treasure! The library gave me desk space in a small room next to the oriental section, and I settled in for many happy months. It had now become my duty to read all the great poets of the East which I had for long yearned to know, but only found in snatches. When spring came we moved back to The Brocken, but I continued to go to town every day to the library. I also consulted other public and private libraries in New York, including that of my old friends from China and Japan, Gertrude Emerson and Elsie Weil, who were then editing *Asia*. They had many rarities. Later I took in the libraries in Chicago, and of course all the magazines and everything my friends had done in the way of translations. I don't think I missed much. The book mattered a great deal to me.

As fast as I decided on a poem definitely, we wrote for permission to reprint. Cloyd helped me enormously in this. I could never have got through the great weight of clerical work without him, for we found to our surprise that these permissions took more time than the actual anthology itself. We had to send letters and receive replies—often several for a single poem—from every remote spot on the earth, from Allahabad and Leyden and Kyoto and Shanghai and cities in Africa and a hundred others. And there were trip-ups on the fees.

We had now decided to go back to Tunisia for the winter,

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and we had booked passage on one of the smaller Fabre Line boats sailing in November. We had picked out this particular one because it was the only boat of the year that stopped at the Cape Verde Islands, down near the Equator off the west coast of Africa. All the small Fabre Line ships made the most delightful and unexpected stops to pick up or discharge cargo. Part of their charm lay in never knowing just where they would stop next. Neither did the captain know. But this particular boat knew it was going to the Cape Verdes, and carried a large number of Portuguese Negroes returning home there.

My attitude towards sea voyages is a somewhat peculiar one. I am never happy on board ship. Even when I am not actively seasick some obscure change takes place in my disposition. I who am usually cheerful and equable to the point where I am convinced that I cannot be a real poet—lacking the temperament—become on shipboard grumpy and irrational. I thrust off my children and growl when they come near me. They know me by this time and bear with me, for the simple reason that I will go anywhere. I will endure weeks of discomfort for the sight of one green island rising from the sea, or one frowning headland swathed in mist. And a day with the primitive peoples of some forgotten port is worth a month of sailing.

So now I was determined to see the Cape Verdes. But the anthology was not yet finished, the indices and the permissions to reprint. We speeded up the work till at last it became almost gargantuan, almost Normanesque. I gave myself only one day in New York to do all the purchasing necessary for a winter abroad. Cloyd and I worked all day and half of every night. Janet, who usually was a tower of strength, had done as youngsters do and left us for the University of Wisconsin.

At last came the night before we were to sail. Having had

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not a moment to pack, I had left it for this evening. By this time I was moving in a haze of weariness. About one o'clock Cloyd suddenly seized me forcibly by the shoulders and thrust me into bed. He told me afterwards that I was literally unconscious on my feet. I would pick up some article from the table, carry it groggily to a chair and deposit it, only to carry it back presently to the table.

Well—we made the boat next morning. On the way to Brooklyn we delivered the manuscript to Knopf!

But our luggage was fantastic, like something out of an old Keystone comedy. It was necessary to get another trunk somewhere. So the next day, when the boat stopped at Providence to pick up the Negroes, we went into the town to make some purchases. The worst hour of my life up to the moment I write this was passed in a department store there, and in the taxi going back to the boat. I had pushed myself beyond my physical strength, and I became suddenly persuaded that I was going mad. Only the good blood of my Puritan ancestors kept me from letting go, from screaming and raving and tearing my hair. And a hideous black fear seized me and tore at my vitals. The blood ran out of the palms of my hands where I had clenched my fingernails to hold on.

But I held. We reached the boat, and I at once fell into a deep sleep. The next morning I looked at myself in the tiny mirror in the cabin and saw that my own face was back again. It was haggard and drawn, in fact hideous—and it was dirty. But it was my own face. I washed it with cold cream and saw something like sanity emerge.

I needed it. That night we struck a hurricane. All afternoon the sea had been whipping up, and by nightfall it was like moving hills. The ship was small, old, and leaky. We were told afterwards that she had been condemned as not sufficiently seaworthy for transatlantic passage, and that she was

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making her last trip. Her name, I believe, was the *Roma*. But we had a splendid captain.

We passed very near the center of the hurricane. All around us ships were in distress. The *Valerian* went down that night, and nearly two hundred lives were lost in all. We heard the S.O.S. from three different vessels, but there was no hope of our going to the rescue. We had more than enough to keep afloat.

Our cabin fortunately was on the promenade deck, opening off the one public room of the ship, a sort of combined smoking, drawing, and card room. Cloyd, with his usual efficiency, had put everything we owned back into the trunks, and had wedged the bags in a corner. Only the steamer trunk could not be fastened anywhere, and all night long it wandered erratically up and down the cabin, grinding the bright green carpet into a wet mess, for the water from the wash-basins had long ago sprayed out. He tied Marshall to his berth, where by some alchemy of childhood the boy slept quietly enough most of the night. As for me, the occasion was far too serious for my usual seasickness. I was too busy trying to keep from having my brains knocked out against the wall. And withal I was quite calm.

Why is it, I wonder, that human beings can so seldom produce the indicated emotion at the proper time? There was I, who the day before had suffered the torments of the damned because I was tired in a taxicab, now meeting the distinct threat of death for the three of us with no more than a slight sinking in the region of my solar plexus. It has always been so with me, and I believe it to be so with most people. I expect as long as I live to agonize periodically over nonessentials, and to die quite casually . . .

About eleven o'clock or so a huge wave smashed in all the portholes in the decks below and carried away various bits of

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the ship. The lower staterooms and corridors being all awash, the unfortunate passengers thus thrust out crowded into the small public room. During the occasional momentary lulls we could hear them praying and singing hymns and sometimes screaming. That added to the gayety.

But, thanks to the splendid seamanship of the captain, we survived. By daylight the wind had lessened, and the sea became somewhat calmer. We lay, totally exhausted. Finally, along towards noon, a steward with a green face opened the door. I expected to see him disturbed by the carpet, but instead a beatific grin spread weakly over his features.

"*Mais, madame, ceci, ça n'est rien!*" he assured me. "You should see the cabin of the young woman next to yours. She has never been to sea before and she seems to be quite popular. People had given her presents of fruit and flowers. She left all her bags open, all her toilet articles spread out, and the fruit and flowers tastefully displayed. The floor this morning was a solid wet mass of mangled fruit, flowers, lingerie, toilet articles, shoes and what not, in which broken bags made sad islands." I thought of the line from James Elroy Flecker's *Old Ships* that

. . . rolled

Blood, water, fruit, and corpses up the hold.

I laughed, and felt better, and life began again.

We came to the Cape Verdes, and they were worth the trouble. Beautiful sharp barren islands in the tropical sea, inhabited by Negroes of shiny ebony, the children naked as statues. We stayed a day in São Vicente. To our surprise, for we knew nothing of the islands except that they were a Portuguese possession, we met and talked with several reserved young Englishmen. I have often thought of them since, so far away, so lonely, so surrounded by aliens, and yet so up-to-date in their

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knowledge. For they are employees of the cable companies, and tend the knot of transatlantic cables that meet there, carrying news from all parts of the civilized world. They, who scarcely see a human being of their own kind from one year to the next, yet know of many public events before the London, New York, and Paris newspapers know of them. How strange is the modern world!

After the Cape Verdes we stopped at the Canary Islands and at Madeira. Then the Fabre Line dumped us out at Oran, in Algeria. They had decided not to stop at Algiers after all! But they paid our fare there. We took the railroad line across Algeria to Tunis, and were at home again. For so it seemed to us then.

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## 18

### Sidi-bou-Saïd

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THIS time we were determined to live in Sidi-bou-Saïd, the white Arab village that climbs up the headland of Carthage. From this jutting promontory Hannibal looked across the blue and salty sea towards Italy—and doom. Every stone in the whole peninsula is drenched and dark with blood and with history. Yet the Arab village is light and high-keyed. It gleams in the sun with an almost eerie whiteness, with a quality of unreality which survives even familiarity. Although we lived there a whole winter, we felt when we left, as we had felt when we came, that Sidi-bou-Saïd was a stage setting for a fairy-tale.

Beauty was the chief character in our saga that winter, a beauty that caught the breath, that was sometimes so startling that I was perforce obliged to retreat before it into the house to rest my spirit. Our villa was the last on the promontory on the side of the Bay of Tunis, and from our balcony we overlooked the great blue sweep of the bay. Down to the right lay the long curve of Carthage, sleeping now quietly with the untroubled sleep of history; across the shimmering expanse of water rose the Bou-Korneïn, that great two-horned mountain which was held sacred in the old Punic days; over the shallows flew and waded large flocks of white and pink flamingos, and



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on the bay itself tiny fishing boats, each with one triangular white sail, tacked and sped in couples like white butterflies. In the evening the stars were silver blossoms.

The village too was beautiful. The rectangular white houses, interspersed with tall dark poplar trees and dusty green cactus, straggled down the hill in irregular lines. The Marabout of Sidi-bou-Saïd—some say the saint who lies buried here was St. Louis, and some an Arab holy man—gleamed in a fold of the hill and the muezzin chanted from the sharp minaret. Below in the streets the veiled Arab women, here swathed in white, passed silently, and the sturdy Arab men walked in dignity and aloofness.

Yet somehow, for all the beauty of it, we never felt at home in Sidi-bou-Saïd. I dare say we were a bit too earthy for a fairy-tale, whose more practical sides are always left to the imagination. For one thing, there is no water. All the water for drinking and for bathing is brought up the hill in casks slung pannier-fashion on the backs of small donkeys that toil up the narrow streets to the loud chirps of their drivers. They are picturesque enough in all conscience—but it is hard to live on strict water-rations. You will probably have grasped that we do not set too much store on conveniences—what real traveller does?—but after all we do like water. For another thing, the weather is inclement there during the winter. This part of Tunisia has a Mediterranean climate, with sudden violent downpours that drench everything. Once a small boy was drowned in the gutter in Sidi-bou-Saïd in such a downpour. For a third thing, the Arabs belong to the richer classes. Many of them have veritable palaces; some belong to the old Beylical royal family. The Bey himself lives in the next village, La Marsa. And these people hold themselves aloof from foreigners. God wot, I cannot blame them for this, seeing how they have suffered from the *Roumis!* *Roumis*, Romans, we are to

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them to this day, with the connotations which Romans must have to this people of Carthage.

We knew a few of them. I went to several weddings, but found their sophistication not so much to my taste as the more primitive ceremonies of Hammamet, though there is a single instant of drama at the moment called "The Words of the Mouth," when the bride and groom look upon each other for the first time, which stirs one profoundly. But in the main these weddings are too bound round with formalities and awakening westernism to be really moving. I took lessons also with an Arab scholar, translating the ancient pre-Islamic poetry of Arabia, that beautifully exact poetry, so utterly drenched in freedom and love of nature. But the book of translations I planned has still to be done.

Marshall was then six. He had had a season of kindergarten in New York, but now he started his formal schooling in a little French school among the ruins of Carthage. Every morning we took him down on the tramway which goes along the coast, and every afternoon we went down to fetch him. Afterwards we usually walked about among the remains of ancient grandeur, trying to conjure up the days of its greatness. There is very little left above ground at Carthage and only a long acquaintance with it can summon the ghosts from their centuries of sleep. But we succeeded. We made friends with the French artist in charge of the excavations for the government, M. Groseille, a quiet serious person who never tired of his work and who was endlessly patient with us. Marshall named him "Old Man Ruins," and even I always see in my mind's eye his sensitive gaunt face framed in broken pillars and straggling bits of wall. We went constantly to the several museums, especially that of the *Pères Blancs*, where the patriarchal Père Delattre sometimes cleared up difficulties for us. They leave something to be desired as excavators, the *Pères Blancs*, but

they know a great deal. We went to all the tombs, the Roman villas, the Byzantine ruins, the amphitheatre and the other remains; we wandered again and again over the stage of the theatre, working out what this and that might be, trying to conjure up the performances in the days when Apuleius was manager and the Roman populace sweated and roared approval. We read everything we could find on the darker and far more interesting Punic days, with their pitifully many small stone coffins of the children sacrificed to Moloch, and their vestiges of the worship of Tanit. And we came at last to feel that the whole pageant was alive for us. We could close our eyes and see the Byrsa crowned with its temples and crowded with the gaunt houses of that race of ancient Semitic travelling salesmen which was the Carthaginian race, without an authentic culture of their own—everything they had was a mixture of pseudo Greek and Egyptian—and whose only genius was commercial and military. We could feel too the later sweep of history, after the Roman era, when the Byzantines conquered and rebuilt it, when St. Louis died there in a cave in the hillside after a Crusade, when the Vandals, the Arabs in several waves, the Andalusians, and others swept over it in careless and scrambled cycles, leaving it each time more trodden in the dust. And we could conjure up the old piratical days of the Barbary Coast.

It was one day while we were sitting at tea in a French café, resting from our explorations, that we heard the news that an unknown American named Lindbergh had flown the Atlantic alone.

We went further afield from time to time. We climbed the Bou-Korneïn; we went to that other sacred mountain, Zaghouan, whence comes the water for the city of Tunis, as it came over the famous aqueducts to ancient Carthage; we met numerous French diplomats, from M. Lucien Saint, the Resi-

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dent General, and M. Poinssot, head of the *Bureau des Antiquités*, down, and we learned much of how France is governing this colony. We had plenty to interest us.

Very few foreigners live in Sidi-bou-Saïd, but we had one real friend among them. This was an elderly Englishwoman, Mrs. Windust, one of the most charming people imaginable. She had the personality of a priestess, in the classic manner, the only real priestess I have ever known. Her snow-white hair framed her sweetly dignified face in soft folds, and the white half-Arab garments she always wore flowed gently about her. Her drawing-room was filled with early Arab furniture, rich and dark and skillfully painted, and beautifully chased bronzes and brasses. She was a Theosophist. I loved her deeply, although I could not always follow nor understand her.

One day she sent for me in haste. Something interesting was going to happen. I went full of curiosity and found a young Arab there who said he was "one of Sidi-bou-Saïd's boys." What he meant by this I do not know exactly, except that he was a follower of the Marabout who lay buried in the shrine. He was going to materialize something today. In a genial haze of mystery I sat and watched.

The young man went searching through the room till he found what suited him, a large and very beautiful brass tray. With this he retired to the farther end of the large drawing-room, and stood in a corner with his back to us, holding the tray before him. It was dusk by this time, and we saw of course nothing but his back. Then he began a series of chants and incantations, from which he fell into a sudden silence. In the silence we heard very distinctly four heavy thumps on the tray. Then he turned round beaming, and presented Mrs. Windust with four wax candles. She and the Dutch friend who lived with her were amazed and deeply impressed. They

seemed to take it for granted that such materialization was more than likely to happen.

But better yet was to come. He told us that he would try to do it just once more, though it would be more difficult the second time. Again he took his tray and retired into the shadows, and again he chanted his incantations. When the silence fell this time, we heard many small pattering thumps on the resounding brass, and the young man returned to us in triumph bearing—of all possible things!—a handful of pieces of English toffee, each wrapped in a piece of tinsel paper and each bearing the name of its London maker! This, he explained, was out of compliment to Mrs. Windust. Well—he had chosen his observer with acumen. I really think she believed she had seen a miracle.

Mrs. Windust herself had certain extramundane powers, though she was very reticent about them. An Arab in one of the oases of the Sahara told me once that he had seen her hold fire in her hand without burning herself. . . .

But although I was left quite cold as to the supernatural origin of the toffee, there is no doubt that both Cloyd and I, during our stays in Tunisia, became infected with the primitive belief in the supernatural as an element of life. In the United States we never feel it. What spirit, free to roam, would choose to dwell in a place where nobody believed in his existence? But in primitive places we fall quite easily into a half-belief in those unseen and mysterious forces that are so keenly felt by the natives. Most sensitive white men who have lived any length of time among simple peoples come to feel that they know things which we cannot understand and to credit these things almost against our will. Certain animated idols, for instance, we would never dream of keeping in our house, and there are precautions to be taken at times . . .

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It was while we were in Sidi-bou-Saïd that I at last had news of that exotic figure William Montgomery McGovern whom I knew in Japan, and of whom I had not since heard. One day, opening the little sheet of the London *Daily Mail*, whose continental edition supplied our news, I saw that he was lost up the Amazon and that his friends were worried about him. Twice something of this appeared. But I discovered his trail only to lose it again, for I was unable to find out whether he had been found or not, in the tantalizing fashion of modern journalism.

That winter we had visitors. First Cloyd's gracious father and mother, always an important element in our lives, came over from the States, and later my own mother. And then, wonderful to relate, my sister Louise from China appeared. She had reason to leave her post. She was then already stationed in Hsiakwan, the port of Nanking, and what the newspapers called "the Nanking outrages" had just occurred. A southern army had invested the town, killed several acquaintances of hers, and imprisoned fifty of the commercial people in the home of the director of the Standard Oil Company there. Louise escaped in a gunboat, and, being unable to return to work, she came around via Suez and joined us in Sidi-bou-Saïd.

We went together to Dougga, one of the old Roman cities whose ruins are scattered over this part of the world. It has been excavated rather completely in recent years, disclosing one or two very interesting Punic monuments and the remains of a prosperous Roman town. The theatre, in especial, had just then been completely uncovered, and the seats put in order so that they might be used. The stage also had been to a certain extent restored, though the wall which originally backed it was gone and the sunlit landscape showed between the decorative pillars. Now the Comédie Française had come

from Paris and was to give a gala performance there, the first performance in this place after its seventeen centuries of dusty sleep. All the dignitaries of the French colonial world, and a rather large crowd of other people, had motored out from Tunis.

The afternoon had curious overtones. The bare and arid countryside stretched away in the clear sunlight, dotted with ruined walls and half-completed excavations, and a melancholy little breeze stirred the robes of the Arabs and the skirts of the painfully modern Frenchwomen. The crowd seemed most unimposing in this immensity, and curiously ineffectual. They sat in the curved bowl of the theatre that stretched up the side of the hill. Above them on the hilltop sat a fringe of Bedouins against the sky, tall and picturesque, the only human beings at home here. One of these Bedouins stopped me and asked whether foreign women or Arab women were to dance in the performance. I told him neither, but he plainly did not believe my attempt to explain the classic tradition.

For the Comédie had chosen to present Racine's *Phèdre*. It was a peculiarly inept choice. In Tunis itself they had given *Œdipus Rex*, which would have suited admirably, but for some reason this far more interesting occasion saw them rolling out the bombastic and insipid pseudoclassical lines of Racine. The production also was pseudo to a startling degree, the women dressed in pink chiffon draped in the fashions of the Paris *couturiers* to suggest the Greek, and the men in gilt and purple robes which would have been at home in the opera in Paris. Albert Lambert, who, when he and I were both young, had commanded my schoolgirlish adoration from afar, played the dark Orestes. He was now middle-aged, with a large *embonpoint*. He was dressed in very pink fleshings and a small leopard skin which covered most of his body but stopped at the lower end of his stomach, so that in profile the

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silhouette dropped away nearly a foot before his legs emerged. On his back he carried such a little golden quiver as children wear when representing Cupid, from which tiny arrows protruded. His dark French-cut beard had been powdered to appear blond, but it failed dismally to match his wig. He made a pitiful, even a ludicrous Orestes, though his beautiful voice and marvellous diction still remained with him. Only the woman who played Phèdre gave a certain illusion. And as they strutted before the broken pillars we looked past them over the wide and ruin-covered landscape.

What singular ineptitude overtakes the great French spirit at times! On its own home ground the Comédie Française is, for all its frozen formality, a creation of exactitude and beauty; but here it was the height of the absurd, something to make one believe with the classicists that dignity and true beauty have died out in the human race.

Late that spring mother and I went down alone into the desert and stayed at the little inn in the oasis of Nefta. The indescribably picturesque market place, the red earth ramparts, the smoky green of the rivulets and the brilliant green of the planted area were unchanged. Its fascination gripped me again and swept me out of myself into some far world of the imagination. Mother too was alight with pleasure. We went out into the desert and felt the great winds of freedom blow over us.

One evening as we sat at the inn a Bedouin came and offered us for sale a baby gazelle from the Sahara, a beautiful smooth brown creature with long graceful legs and a firm upright neck. I took it in my lap and fondled it. The poor thing did not seem at all afraid. Its heart was not thumping wildly, nor did it struggle nor resent my hand. Instead it sat in my lap, warm and still, holding its neck strongly erect and looking at me out of its great brown eyes. I knew then why the



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Arabian poets sing always of the gazelle eyes of the beloved. They were so soft and liquid and trusting, and they held a far mystery in their brown depths. I was profoundly moved and would have bought the pretty creature at once, trusting to be able to feed it goat's milk and dreading its fate with the Bedouin. But mother would not consent. "I do not think it will live," she said to me, and aloud to the interpreter, "Tell the man that if he will bring it tomorrow we will buy it." The Arab was furious with us, snatched the gazelle from my hand, and cursed us. The next morning we enquired for it, but it was dead.

Later mother went back to America, and presently Louise went too, taking Marshall with her. Cloyd and I gave up the villa in Sidi-bou-Saïd and repaired to Hammamet, where we stayed for a month or so, writing on a play which never came to anything. It was while we were there this second time that we had an amusing example of the way prohibition works the world over. The Koran, you know, was the forerunner of our own "noble experiment," and firmly forbids liquor in any form to the Muslims.

A couple of miles from the village, up the coast, was a small French hotel to which we used to repair often in the late afternoon, after work was finished, for tea or an *apéritif*. One day, sitting on the tiny balcony, we saw the leading dancer of the village, Djuma, and his dancing partner come into the grounds. This Djuma was a real genius in his way, so much so that we thought during *Arabesque* of importing him to dance for New York. But on second thought we knew he could not stand up against our civilization, and that he would be ruined by it. This day Cloyd had something to ask him, and we waited for him to appear in the restaurant. But he did not. So we called the Frenchwoman who ran the hotel.

"Where is Djuma?" we asked.

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"Behind the chicken-coop," was the unexpected answer, "having a drink."

"But why behind the chicken-coop?"

"Oh, that is because of the authorities. You know the French law that no restaurant may serve intoxicating liquor to a native. So we always hide them."

"Do you have many?" we asked.

"Yes, a good number now," was the complacent answer. "It depends on the Sheik of the village. The last Sheik was very poor—no discipline. He allowed *those Italians* to sell wine openly in the village itself. We had little trade out here beyond the town limits. But the present Sheik is a fine man. He keeps the village in order and no wine is served. So our affairs are marching very well." I have seldom heard a public official praised for a more peculiar reason!

At last even this sojourn had to come to an end, and we prepared to go home. But we had one unfulfilled longing, to see Fez, and we determined to satisfy it, being now childless and footloose. Algiers we knew, and did not care to see again. It is now simply a French watering-place with a dirty Arab quarter left for show, the one really dirty Arab spot we have seen, though some beautiful Moorish buildings still remain.

We therefore took the train across country till the railroad stopped at Oudjda, and from there went across the desert by autobus to Fez. We travelled by night to avoid the great heat, starting about midnight. By great good luck the moon was exactly at the full, a moon far larger than any earthly moon has a right to be. It hung, even at the zenith, a heavy silver disk whose light spread like water over the featureless landscape. As it began to decline, it grew larger and more ruddy till we could hardly credit our eyes. Hour after hour we rode in silence across the dusty stretches of the desert, seeing nothing but the moonlight, passing nothing except an occasional

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French blockhouse, where sleepy sentinels watched us as we passed. Towards morning, as we came nearer to Fez, the road began to climb through broken but still arid country, and we passed a column of weary French soldiers and Arab herders going to market with their cattle and fat-tailed sheep. Then we passed carts and camels going to the same market. By the time we reached Fez in the early morning we were speechless with pleasure, and weariness.

Fez! No city that I have seen has for me the strange dark fascination of this city. Its high, sombre, I had almost said sinister, houses crowded together behind a high wall in a circle of arid hills; its narrow covered streets, their shadows filled with scenes so exotic as to be almost unbelievable to a westerner; its *madrasahs* and *zouaoui*, the universities where the ancient Mohammedan learning is taught, beautiful architecturally beyond our most winged imaginings; and the mood of ancient culture beyond our understanding, rigid, haughty, cruel, and beautiful, which hates the westerner with an undying hate—these things give it a quality not to be found in softer cities. Beside it Peking is tame. In the streets of Fez, if one pause but an instant to glance into the open doorway of a forbidden mosque, one is sure to see a figure in a flowing burnoose regarding one from the shadows with the steady hatred of a hawk's eyes. The sinister overtone is everywhere, not to be escaped. Yet the fascination is greater.

It was July when we were there, and very hot. Almost no tourists obscured the city. We knew no one, being the veriest outsiders. Nevertheless a wealthy merchant, the Sherif Mohammed, invited us to luncheon at his house, hoping to sell us something. He succeeded, by the way. We enjoyed it enormously. The house was very interesting, the rooms inlaid with tile and set with fountains. I was taken up to the harem and introduced to a number of women, with whom I could not

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speaking but succeeded nevertheless—I have a technique in these matters—in getting acquainted. They may have been his wives, or they may have been hired for the occasion. I could not be sure. At all events they were rather openly scornful of the western tourist.

At luncheon I met my Waterloo in the matter of food. In Hammamet we had learned to eat with our fingers without boggling too much, though we never learned the ease and daintiness with which the Arabs do it, soiling only the very tips of their fingers. But there the food was always cut up before being brought to the table. Here at the Sherif Mohammed's a huge roast of mutton, quite virgin of utensils, was set in the middle of the table and I was invited to help myself. When I hesitated, not knowing how to begin such a task in company, the Sherif with an exclamation of scornful amusement attacked it barehanded and tore it in pieces, laying one on my plate. After that I managed. The whole event was amusing, but very much for the tourist.

We saw nothing below the surface of Fez, but that surface was enough to wear our emotions to a frazzle, between delight and shrinking, in the five days we were there.

On the way back we stopped at Tlemcen, where the clear breath-taking beauty of the *zaouia* with its fretwork and minarets finished our subjugation. Some day we shall return to Morocco. Perhaps we shall never leave it . . .

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## 19

### The Goodman Theatre Years

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BEFORE we left Hammamet, Cloyd had had a letter from Thomas Wood Stevens, then director of the Kenneth Sawyer Goodman Memorial Theatre, a part of the Art Institute of Chicago, asking him to come back and be business manager the next year. So we headed home from Fez to Chicago.

In New York, however, I discovered that work on my *Poetry of the Orient* had been held up by Dutton's, who refused permission for some of the poems necessary for the anthology. I put on my best bib and tucker and succeeded in coaxing the permission out of them. Then I took back the manuscript and revised it, adding to it from sources I had discovered in North Africa, the library of the University of Chicago and others. In all I was nearly three years working on the manuscript in one way and another. The book was worth it though, being a labor of love. It had nothing but praise from the critics in America, England, and the Orient, and I received many heart-warming letters from all over the world, even from scholars, which is rare for a mere poet. I still have a sense of satisfaction when I think of this anthology. With the books of my own poetry I am never satisfied . . .

In Chicago we settled down in an apartment on Pearson

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Street, opposite the old water tower which Oscar Wilde once said looked like something in a fish-globe, and Cloyd began his work. He stuck at it for three years, though how he managed it I have never been able to discover. He was a sort of Pooh-Bah of the establishment. He was business manager, house manager, press agent; he taught in the school; he directed; he did everything that nobody else could or would do. His duties as business manager took him to the theatre at nine-thirty in the morning, and his duties as house manager kept him there till after eleven at night. And Sundays were worse than weekdays, for then the theatre was rented to outside organizations. His office, too, was wretched, with no outside window and therefore no fresh air. He had no life of his own of any kind. I never saw him at all except when he fell heavily into bed at night, and when I went to tea with him, which I often did in the afternoon. How we preserved our mutual affection is a mystery to me to this day. But we managed.

The greatest event of these years for us was a production of *The Little Clay Cart* which he directed. This masterpiece of early Hindu literature is as fresh today as when it was written centuries ago, full of humanity and humor, of beauty and quaint charm. Cloyd's production was a delight. With his fine sensitiveness he had conventionalized the whole action without losing any of the humor or humanity. It looked like a Rajput miniature and played like a modern comedy. The actors outdid themselves and the audience adored it. It is still a bright spot in Chicago's memory.

Soon after its long run was over, Maurice Browne came on a flying trip from London. I can still see the two men together. Maurice was saying that he had heard such splendid things of the production, and Cloyd, who is far too humble for his own good—as humble as an early Christian—answered:

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"I'm glad you have. The youngsters certainly did themselves proud."

Maurice threw back his head and laughed his old hearty laugh. "Yes," he said, "I know you! The actors did themselves proud, the scenic man outdid himself, the stage hands were wonderful—and you had nothing to do with it at all!" Blessings on Maurice for understanding.

This visit of Maurice's was a great pleasure to us, a pleasure with a queer ironic tang to it. You see in the old days Chicago had let him nearly starve to death, had watched the marvels he did on the stage of the Chicago Little Theatre with no realization at all that he was inaugurating a totally new movement in the American theatre, and had smiled in that infuriatingly supercilious way unperceiving people can smile and called him "impractical," and many worse things. And now he was the overlord of the English stage, owner of two of the most important London theatres, and cock of the walk of the English-speaking theatre.

So now Chicago was flatteringly, fawningly at his feet. The very people who had treated him worst, now acclaimed him most loudly. The clubs gave dinners in his honor, the women cooed and gurgled. And Maurice smiled, remembering, a queer little gentle smile that went up one side of his mouth, and he spoke to them again, as he had spoken before, of beauty and integrity, of his dream for the future of the theatre. Never was reversal so complete, or so satisfying to us who had always believed in his dream.

It was sometime during these years that my phone rang one day, and out of the prosaic instrument came the voice of William Montgomery McGovern, back from Lhasa, found from the upper Amazon, reappearing by some twist of fate in the Field Museum of Chicago! We saw him and found him still

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the same exotic figure, though somewhat older and garbed now in conventional clothes. There is a queer aura of romance and mystery about anyone whom one has known in the antipodes, something psychological that clings like a perfume and cannot be washed away by the prosiness of everyday living. A number of people have this aura for me, William McGovern among them. I should not be surprised to meet his tall bird-like person and his aristocratic hands in Timbuctoo or Teheran any day, and when he walks down Michigan Avenue in Chicago somehow these far places always walk with him. He has been for several years now on the staff of Northwestern University, but he still finds time to skip off to Persia or the isles of Greece.

We have other friends too in Chicago who carry the same romance with them: Baker Brownell, professor of contemporary thought at Northwestern, who loves Guatemala and has been to the Galápagos Islands; Carl Beecher, for many years head of the school of music in the same institution, who is as devoted to the South Seas as we are; Ralph Linton, anthropologist of the University of Wisconsin, who has also worked in the South Seas and is a member of the sorcerers' union of Madagascar; Rudyerd and Laura Boulton of the Field Museum, who have investigated birds and primitive music all through equatorial Africa; and—though we know them less well—Mary Hastings Bradley and her husband. With these people we can pass endless happy hours.

Another thing I did then—or perhaps it was later—was a recital with Berta Ochsner the dancer. Part of her program was given over to dancing to the spoken word, without music. I read a number of oriental poems from my *Anthology*, and Berta danced them. I loved the endless rehearsals, for this form takes far more exact coördination than dancing to music. It was fascinating to me to see how a fine artist of her caliber



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constructs her dances, and with what subtle skill she avoids the clichés.

The last of these winters I joined with William McGovern and Ralph Fletcher Seymour in founding a small club called The Thirty Club. It had just thirty members, no officers and no organization. All were actively engaged in writing or publishing, and we met at luncheon once a month for a good gossip on the literary situation in general. Among the publishers, in addition to Seymour, were Roger Sergel of the Dramatic Publishing Company, Athol Rollins of Compton's and Harold Wheeler of the Wheeler Publishing Company. The writers included Howard Vincent O'Brien, Kenneth Horan, June Provine, James O'Donnell Bennett, Fanny Butcher, Robert Casey, Mary Donahey, Llewellyn and Susan Jones, Arthur Meeker, Margaret Ayers Barnes, Cloyd Head, Alice Gerstenberg, the playwright, and Marjorie Barrows who really belonged on both ends, being a writer as well as editor of *Child Life*. It was good fun while it lasted; and when at the end of three winters it began to show signs of decay we killed it promptly. Perhaps because of this we all remember it with pleasure.

Nevertheless those three years in Chicago were not good years for me. I was virtually widowed of my husband, and Janet, who is always my delight, was away in college in Madison. Also I was in poor health. I grew fat and logy, my face in the mirror round and pale as the face of a clock. I was alone most of the time, for I could not go anywhere with Cloyd and I would not go with any other man. And a lone, but still attached, female is none too welcome at good parties. I remember the years chiefly as a series of banquets and public dinners at which I was always a speaker. Somewhere I had acquired a reputation as an amusing after-dinner speaker and wit—just how it happened, I do not know, for I felt anything but amus-

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ing—and I was greatly in demand. So I went laboriously to banquets, said my little piece, bowed as gracefully as I might, and cursed fate.

If it had not been for my work I should have been desperate. As it was I threw myself headlong into writing. I wrote three books in those three years and collected my scattered poems into a fourth. The first was a book for children called *Boy of the Desert*, telling of the life of a small Tunisian Arab. I had begun this in Sidi-bou-Saïd, but most of it was written in Chicago. Coward-McCann published it. My old friend Will Hollingsworth did the illustrations and make-up, and a fine book he made of it.

The second, also published by Coward-McCann, was another book for youngsters, but older ones, in that in-between stage where juvenile books pall and grown-up books are not quite understood. It is a retelling, the only one in English, of the great Arabian epic of Antár, the pre-Islamic poet. I called it by its ancient title *The Romance of Antár*, and I loved every word of it. What a magnificent figure this Antár is, so heroic in the grand old epic manner, so tender in his love story, so satisfyingly savage and untamed! The story has more honest guts than any tale I know, and the episode of his death is to me the greatest death-story in literature, greater than Roland, or Achilles or Samson.

The book of poems is called *Leaves in Windy Weather*, and is a collection of miscellaneous short poems.

The fourth book I did in collaboration with Robert Lee Eskridge, the painter. Bob is a queer fellow, fundamentally uneducated but with a great deal of flair, more than a little mad, but very decoratively and interestingly so. He had been in the South Seas for several years, residing once on Manga Reva in the Gambier or Forgotten Islands. One day he appeared with a huge heterogeneous mass of papers—it could

hardly be called a manuscript—and told me he wanted to write a book about Manga Reva, but didn't know how. Would I do it with him? The idea amused me. Chicago was cold and drab, and I was restless again after two years. So I showed him how to organize a book and sent him home to bring some sort of order out of chaos. He learned fast. He began all over again, working furiously, and brought me the stuff, chapter by chapter. I then rewrote most of it, keeping entirely to Bob's material and trying to leave as much as I could of his own colorful and impressionistic style. Bob did some splendid illustrations and I wrote a foreword, later much hashed by the publishers, Bobbs-Merrill.

We both enjoyed the work and the long conferences, which somehow turned so often on the supernatural, in which Bob is a devout believer. Certain South Sea *tupapaus*, he was persuaded, were looking after him and protecting him. And I must say that he made a good case for it! One day he even let us in on the benefits. Cloyd and I happened to be going towards the theatre one afternoon when we ran into Bob, and the conversation turned on the fact that we were temporarily hard up financially.

"I'll fix that!" said Bob. "Here is one of my *tupapaus* to help you," and he made believe to put something into Cloyd's pocket. We all laughed and separated. Cloyd went on to the theatre and I went home. I had hardly taken off my hat in the apartment when Cloyd telephoned to say that one of the wealthiest clubs in Chicago had asked him to make a twenty-minute speech the next week, for which they would pay him a hundred dollars!

Incidentally, and quite by the way, this reminds me of the fact that once—it was later, during the depression—Cloyd received a crisp new hundred-dollar bill through the mail from Detroit, without a word of explanation. God wot we needed

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it, but we have never been able to discover who sent it. If the unknown donor should ever read this, I want him or her to know that we are still profoundly grateful. He must be a most unselfish person with a genius for human understanding.

Well—the upshot of my living in spirit in the South Seas during the whole dull Chicago winter, was that when in the spring there was a crack-up in the Goodman Theatre, and everyone connected with the organization, from Tom Stevens and Cloyd and the actors down, resigned in a general protest, I persuaded Cloyd that the thing for us to do was to hop to Tahiti and rest up.

But first there was Janet's wedding. I had imagined that after college she would go on with her anthropology, but it did not turn out that way. I cannot blame her, though I sometimes regret the lopping off of that side of her personality. But to be a successful anthropologist a woman seems to need a husband in the same field. That winter she had almost secured a post to go with an expedition which was to excavate in North Africa, but at the last moment she lost because she was not married. And after her marriage she was refused another scholarship with an expedition to the Southwest because she *was* married!

At all events the clear blue eyes and the mop of yellow hair we had met so many years before on the dunes of Indiana had kept their charm for Janet. Chester Hart by now was an architect, practicing in Chicago, and that spring they were married. Chester is a great success as a member of the family.

That spring was another mad scramble for me, what with the wedding, the finishing of *Manga Reva, the Forgotten Islands*, the preparation of a week's lectures on oriental poetry at Pennsylvania State College, which I was to give in July, and the getting ready for the journey. Janet got down from

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Madison about the 21st of June, was married on the 28th and we started off the 1st of July. Whew!

Cloyd and Marshall parked themselves at the dunes, and I went straight off to State College and gave the lectures. I mention these among many only because they were the first step in the laying of a complex which had long troubled me. I had been nagged at for years by the fact that I was not really educated in the formal sense. I have no academic degree of any sort, by my own decision never having been to college. Now I have always been persuaded that for anyone going into business or the sciences or the law, college is a prime necessity, but that for creative artists it is quite as likely as not to do them a serious injury. In my own case I am sure my work has profited by not being rubber-stamped. I have stood by my guns in this, but nevertheless I was touchy on the matter. So when Dr. Orton Lowe showed me that I could teach in college, this began to drop away from me. If I can teach, why worry that I never studied there? And now that I have taught for two years in the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, I believe I am cured. But I still have no degree.

Cloyd and Marshall and I motored out to San Francisco. We had an old car, a Buick, one of those huge open things that had been fashionable a number of years before. Her name was Guenevere, and she had carried us all over the United States and part of Canada in our summer vacations. We were deeply attached to her. Now she took us without a stutter up and over the Lee Vining Creek road through the Sierras, the steepest road in the country. My old love of the mountains reared its head again, and we all sang and laughed and loved it.

When we got to San Francisco we were planning to sell her, much to our regret. Cloyd took her to the secondhand dealers

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and discovered that they would pay him only ten dollars for her! He came back disgruntled to the hotel and there told the Negro porter about it. "Boss," said the porter, "I gives you ten dollars for that car." So we sold her to him.

When we got back from the South Seas, long afterwards, we stayed at the same hotel, but the porter was not there. So I asked the clerk about him. "What has become of William?" "Oh, him!" said the clerk. "About a year ago somebody sold him an old car, and he got in it and went away and never came back." So our own wanderlust had infected even William! I like to think of him still going in Guenevere, a sort of Wandering Jew of the highways, scudding up hills and down, and saying, "Boss, this here car is going to last me a century!"

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### Our South Sea Island

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THIS wrinkled old earth has many forms of enchantment, many ways of bewitching her children. And of them all perhaps none is more alluring than the islands of the South Seas. Yet for the white man it is a dangerous allurements, not for the body but for the spirit. Underneath the fantastic, almost demoniac beauty of the islands lie coiled the dangers of sloth, of too much drink, of degeneration and that most potent danger of all, the discovery that one has no soul. For here, in this opulent and casual life, one is thrown back abruptly upon oneself, one is enclosed in the vast space where the soul should be. And what if the space be empty?

People take it in many ways. The majority, like frightened mice, run squeaking back to the busy marts of civilization where one need never be alone, where one can hide from this ultimate realization in hectic activity. Probably they are wise, for a sort of haze comes over many of those that remain, a genial, slightly befuddled haze that leads them gradually and pleasantly to destruction. Only a few are capable of living here and remaining normal human beings.

For ten months we lived on the islands, watching our fellow Caucasians; and I have a cogent piece of advice to offer to those who think they are weary of civilization and would fain

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lie under the palms and the tropic moon on the white coral beaches, not knowing how prickly coral is. Before going they should examine themselves carefully for two things: First, can they live on beauty alone, can they eat beauty, drink it and worship it, when beauty is all there is in the universe? And second, have they work to do while there? For work is the answer to this, as to so many of man's problems. The creative artist who takes his work with him, the planter or commercial man who has a job there, the scientist who searches for hidden treasures of earth, sea, or lost civilization—these men are fortified against the enchantment. If either of these two necessities is lacking in you, stay away from the islands! Do not go and subject yourself to inevitable disillusionment and dislocation. At most stay the few days that the boat stops, and then hurry away. You will be safe then.

And if you happen to be a woman, examine yourself with double care, for few indeed are the women who can be happy in the islands. Those who go with devoted husbands can sometimes, not always, keep their happiness. Those who are single are doomed. For romance is all about you, in the very air, but romance is for the brown girl, not for you. You will eat your heart out with loneliness.

As for us, we went out with blithe insouciance, knowing nothing of these things. But we had our work, we had each other, and Fate was good to us.

We lived on the island of Moorea, an incredible place, a phantasmagoria of dream. For ten months, day by day and evening by evening, we saw the sun come out of the sea and gild the mountain-tops with gold, or the silver stars hang overhead like ripe fruit—and still we never came quite to believe it. Even to the end I used sometimes to pinch myself to see if I would awaken. Many very earthy happenings occurred



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there, but they were somehow transmuted till they became part of the spell.

For all these happenings were minute. The rhythm of living is almost imperceptible on Moorea. Some days the wind blows, and some days it is still. Some days the natives catch more fish than usual. Some nights are nights of full moon, when the *tupapaus* walk; some are dark and deeply tranquil. At long intervals a strange white tourist will walk past the house. Sometimes a stray pig wanders by. These are the events.

Our disbelief in the possibility of the existence of Moorea began when we first saw it against the sky one morning as we sailed into the harbor of Papeete on Tahiti. Its volcanic mountains are sharper and greener than any mountains on earth, as sharp as the mountains of the moon must be. They rise so swiftly from the water's edge, some of them to a height of four thousand feet, that the breath, following them upward, is lost in a gasp. And they are as jagged as the teeth of a gigantic dislocated saw. They fill the whole interior of the island, and they are completely wild and uninhabited, wholly given over to the thorny tangles of lantana, that tame little plant with spicy blossoms which we have in pots at home, here making an impenetrable thicket.

Around the base of them, beside the lagoon, is a fringe of cultivated land, seldom wider than two or three hundred feet, occupied for the most part by plantations of coconut palms whose boles come out of the ground always at an angle, so that they seem to be slowly waltzing. Here are set the few native houses also. Occasionally a fertile valley cuts back into the hills. Close to the lagoon itself runs the single road of the island, a narrow grass-grown track that circles the whole thirty-six miles of its circumference. Then, after a few feet of prickly coral beach, the lagoon stretches, blue and green and

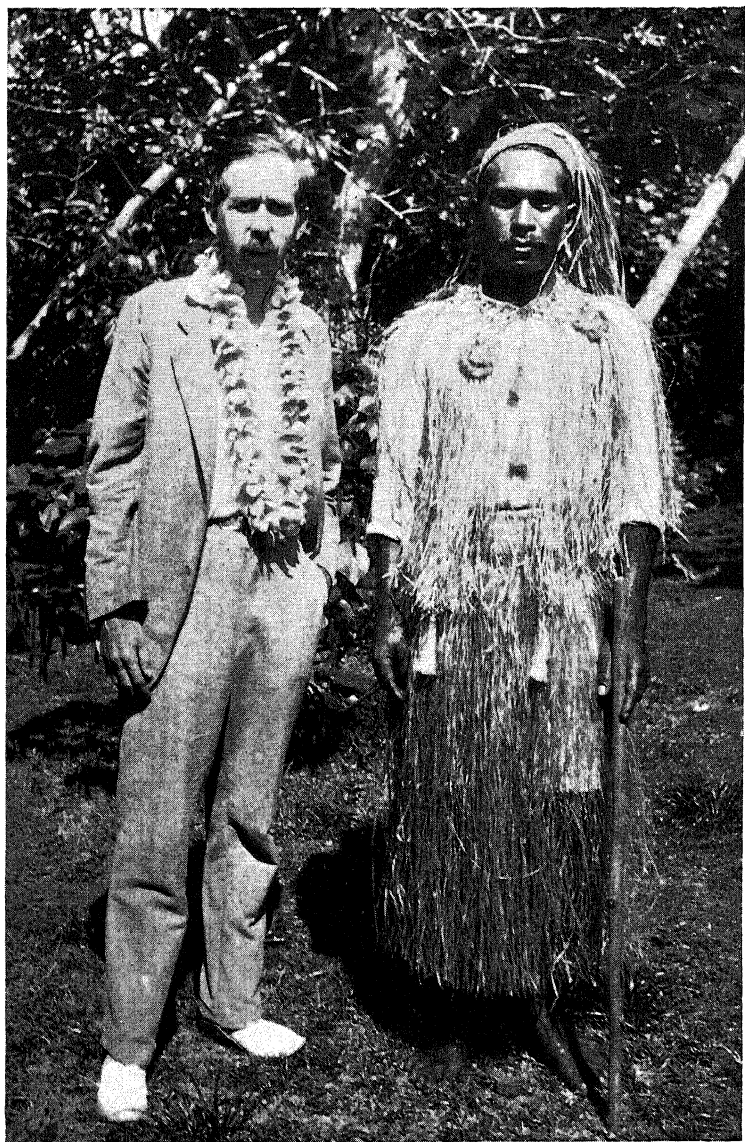
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emerald and brown and lavender and lemon-yellow, to the line of the outer reef where the white surf pounds forever. Beyond the reef are only the slow grey-green swells of the Pacific. But in the waters of the lagoon, as clear as liquid air, swim and drift the incredible fishes of the South Seas, striped, spotted, barred with rainbow colors, some of them so vivid that one would swear they had neon lights in them. One can float over them for hours on end in a native outrigger canoe, looking down through a water-glass, and never tire of this fantastic world where the imagination itself is shamed by the reality, where gravity seems not to exist, and beauty, and sometimes terror, make an enchanted kingdom.

We lived in a small native house belonging to the chief of the region, on the Bay of Faatoai about a mile and a half from the village of Papetoai. There was a story about this house. But perhaps I would better go back a little.

We landed of course on Tahiti, at Papeete, the local metropolis of that part of the world, a small provincial French and native town, picturesque but fundamentally uninteresting. Here we looked about for ten days, but found the island too civilized for us. Soon we were casting yearning eyes towards Moorea, twelve miles away at the nearest point, into the setting sun. But we were told that there were only three or four houses on the island habitable for westerners and that these were all occupied. We had heard such tales before, however, and were not daunted. And indeed the good angel who watches over us in our wanderings came to our rescue as usual.

So one morning we took the little forty-foot steamer, the *Mitiaro*, which plies twice a week between the islands, and set out for Moorea. The passage was terrible! This stretch of water is famous for being always rough, and the little cockleshell pitched and rolled unmercifully. With us were a number of natives who, to our surprise—for somehow we had thought



CLOYD HEAD WITH POO-A-TOPÉ, THE OTÉA DANCER



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the native islanders immune—were all as sick as dogs. So were the two or three Chinese shopkeepers and the sad and melancholy cow tied forward. Henri, the half-caste captain who speaks Tahitian, English, French, and Chinese after a fashion, was the one exception. In his dirty slacks and undershirt he clucked commiseratingly at seeing a foreign woman in distress, and piled a coil of rope for me so that I might hold my feet out of the water which swept the deck. When we staggered groggily out at Papetoai after five or six hours of this I said to Cloyd, "Take a good look at this island, for you will never see it again, if I have to come with you!" Which only shows what foolish remarks I am capable of making. In three days I had forgotten the trip entirely, and though I often made it later I never again gave it a serious thought.

We put up at the inn in the village, now discontinued, run by Captain Cyril Wainwright, commonly called Bill. Bill was an Englishman, one of three permanent white residents of our part of the island, the others being the Medford Kellums. In all, there were at that time seven on Moorea: a French priest at Haapiti, some eight miles distant; a French policeman at Afareaitu, fifteen miles in the other direction; and Robert Dean Frisbie the writer, who lived with Jones at Maharapa, between us and Afareaitu. Wainwright's little inn was delightfully run, far better than any hotel on Tahiti, a really civilized place, though on a small scale. It seldom had more than three or four people in it, often nobody at all.

They had been right in Papeete, however, about houses. The only possibility was the house we later rented, which had been occupied by an American playwright named Martin Merle, who, after painting it inside and out and putting it into livable shape, had proceeded to drink himself to death there. "Deliberate suicide, it was," said Bill, who had seen him through it. He had eaten nothing for two months before he

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died, living entirely on rum and other liquors. Behind the house was a small mountain of bottles, and all night long we could hear the hermit crabs rattling their shells against them with sharp little clicks. It became a part of night on Moorea for us. Why Merle had done this, nobody knew. He was not, I judge, much of a playwright, though he had one Broadway production to his credit; but he had plenty of money to live here very comfortably. The place was hopelessly cluttered with masses of *pareo* cloth, pieces of tapa, strings and strings of the colored shells which the natives said he always wore around his neck, Catholic amulets, grass skirts, and what not. Trunks and boxes were everywhere. And the larder was piled high with canned and bottled dainties from home and demijohns of rum. Later we saw photographs of him, youngish, tall, one of those effeminates with a big jaw and disillusioned eyes. The natives told us that when in his cups he used to play over and over again, "sixteen or twenty times," the Hawaiian phonograph record, *Aloha Oe*, "one fond embrace until we meet again," and weep copiously into his rum. Perhaps that was the reason. Or perhaps I was only being sentimental under the tropic moon.

After his death the place had been sealed by governmental red tape till word could be received from his family in America as to the disposition of his goods. It was still not available for rent. But by good fortune the papers arrived on the same boat with us—and so we got the house. It cost us eight dollars a month because of Merle's paint. Otherwise it would have been four. For those who are interested, our entire expenses, including frequent trips to Tahiti, cost us \$175 a month for the three of us, most of which went for food, since we found the native diet insufficient.

The day we entered into possession of our new domicile was a curious one for us. Medford Kellum, of whom more anon,

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had been appointed executor, and he and his wife came to help pack up Merle's possessions. A week before, we had never heard of Martin Merle. Now, as we counted his sixteen suits of tropic white, his smartly tailored New York clothes, his favorite foodstuffs; as we folded his exotic silk dressing-gowns, laid away his many strings of colored shells; as we took down his amulets, put away his one book—a book of Catholic devotions—and looked at the photographs of his family and friends, wave after wave of curious intimacy came over us. This unhappy dead man stirred in his cerements and spoke to us. And we were filled with a great pity. Why had he come here to forget, and, not forgetting, to die? What thoughts had lain behind his long face and his world-weary eyes? We shall never know these things, any more than we shall know the true story of other white derelicts who come to the islands to die.

But for a long time I continued to think of him. I did not feel that his spirit would hover here, poor fellow, since he had made such effort to leave even this almost delirious beauty. But there was a sort of immanence, a fluttering sense of his personality, clinging about the things with which he had surrounded himself. In life perhaps I should not have cared much for him. In death any human spirit has something completed which demands understanding. And only gradually as the weeks passed did I have the sense that this immanence was dissipating, was blowing away in the wind. Fainter and fainter grew the sense of his housekeeping. Then life flowed over the place where he had been.

Later we stood in the little graveyard high on a hillside in Haapiti—such a tiny graveyard as the one where Gauguin lies buried on another island—and saw the bead wreath with his name and felt him really at peace.

Merle's clothes and odds and ends were sold at auction. The

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village square was crowded for the occasion, which made a gay spot in a village that runs smoothly, with scarcely a ripple to mark the days. The chief, a magnificent old native in a red *pareo* skirt and white coat, unbent his dignity to the proper showmanship of the auctioneer, and the natives, for sheer sport, bid more for used shirts, American suspenders and swanky New York suits which could never be worn here, than they were worth. We could see that the chief was half ashamed to take the money.

The old French priest, Père Felix, one of those delightful old men who are to be met in far places giving their lives for their faith—and sixteen dollars a year—came one morning for his share of Merle's possessions. He lived on the far side of the island, and used to pass the house once a month on his way to a distant group of Catholics. Our own village was Protestant. We had cooked up with Med Kellum a little scheme whereby we hoped to make him keep at least some of the food for his own use, instead of sending it, as he would certainly have done, to the already comfortable bishop in Tahiti. So we told him that Merle had left word that this was a personal gift, not to be diverted to the Church. I am sure his God forgave us the deception. When he saw the canned chicken and ham, the jars of pickles and preserves, the anchovy paste, and the *pâté de foie gras*, his face lighted up with a curious childlike smile. He threw his hands in the air and exclaimed: "But, Madame, it would take me a lifetime to eat all these! It has been so many years since I had anything of the sort." I suspect that he gave them to the sick.

He took the phonograph gladly, but his chief preoccupation seemed to be the portable typewriter, which would be of service to him in his work. Before he went on his rounds he used to write out his sermon for a native to deliver, and the native could not always read his writing. So his conscience was quite



clear about the typewriter, since it would serve his God. We kept him for lunch, and afterwards Cloyd showed him the intricacies of such a machine, of which he was as ignorant as a babe. He spent a half-hour slowly poking out bits of prayers and thanks to Merle's family and to us. Then he ambled happily away behind his old plug. After that he nearly always stopped to pass the time of day. We heard recently that a year ago he had retired, gone back to France to end his life at home. But it didn't take. He is now back at Haapiti, where he belongs. If all men were like him . . .

But perhaps I should say something about the house itself. It was a small place with two rooms, a large closet, and two porches, one of which was screened. A tight squeeze for the three of us. It stood on posts four feet high, as native houses do, and it had a corrugated iron roof to the house and a thatched roof to the porch. Outside at a little distance stood the native cook-house of slate, where rats and *Blatta orientalis*, the famous flying cockroaches a couple of inches long and as flat as a brown leaf, abounded; also the crisp round worms which seem to be always curled up in spirals, and which crunch so disagreeably when one steps on them. I seldom went into the cook-house if it could be avoided. But it was all good clean natural mess, and no harm came to us from it. The house, being newly painted, could be kept clean easily enough. We had no co-inhabitants there except a few blatta, which loved the space between a book cover and the first page, some silver-fish, a few bookworms, thousands of the crunchy worms, and a family of geckos, the house lizards. We loved the geckos. They are such friendly little beasts—and then they eat the mosquitoes.

And it was always damp. Every night our leather shoes grew whiskers of green mould, and every knife and pair of scissors was soon black with rust. At least once a week all our woollen

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clothes had to be hung in the sun to dry, or they mildewed.

Our yard was not large, but it was a constant delight to me. Where the house stood, the space between the lagoon and the roots of the mountains was not wider than a hundred and fifty feet or so. But it contained a whole botanical garden. In front we had a small grassplot and many shrubs. These latter were all as brilliantly colored as parrots. There were hibiscus of several sorts, ten or twelve feet high, with great staring crimson or pink flowers all over them. There was a bush of the sweet-smelling *tiara tahiti*, white and waxlike, and a number of spreading treelike bushes which bear no flowers, but whose leaves are a riot of color, dark red, henna, crimson, yellow ochre, and lemon-yellow. The leaves grow in tufts so that the effect is rather like a group of brilliant and animated feather dusters.

Behind the house was our plantation of coconut palms. They retreated in rows, swaying and waltzing gracefully in the wind, till they met the place where the hills started up almost perpendicularly, covered with scrub and lantana tangle. Under the palms was another plantation of coffee bushes and vanilla vines. And in and out of these, and around the house, grew various trees which bore amazing fruit. We had papaya trees, whose golden globes of fruit ripened mostly for the children and the rats—because they always got to them first—lichee nuts, tamarinds, bananas, a breadfruit tree, an avocado, even a guava. We had no oranges, but back in the valleys were plantations of them, and of lemons. Over the cook-house hung a huge mango tree whose turpentine-tasting fruit lured all the school children to stop and throw stones at it. The vegetation is so lush that if one breaks off a twig of almost anything and sticks it in the ground, it will take root and grow. We had habitually either too much or too little to eat.

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We kept track of the thermometer on our front porch, in the shade. On the coldest winter night the temperature went down to seventy-four, and on the warmest summer day it went up to eighty-six. The trade winds blew most of the year. A good bit of the daytime we had a fine mist of perspiration over our hands and faces, but it was always cool at night so that we could sleep.

Life in such a place is a casual affair. There are no appointments to be kept, nothing that "must be done." Cloyd and I worked steadily every morning, he on a play which has recently been produced with much success, and I presently on another book for children, later published under the title *Boy of the South Seas*. Marshall went for a while to the school in the village. For an hour or so in the afternoons we tutored him, so that he should not miss his grade at home. But after three o'clock we did every day exactly what it occurred to us at the moment to do. We swam constantly in the lagoon, we took long walks, we fished for shrimp in the brooks that come down from the hills, we paddled about in our native canoe and watched the fish, we played with the natives. Often enough we paddled the three miles down the most beautiful bay in the world to the Kellums', or walked to the inn for tea. Often I amused myself by painting—for the incredible beauty of the place had spurred me to take up tempera again, after twenty-five years, and I was astonished to see how much better the things I did were than those I had been doing when I stopped as a girl. It was a perfect existence of its own kind.

The Medford Kellums have the most desirable place on the island: a large plantation that runs backward through a valley in the hills, where they grow copra and beef; a really civilized house with quantities of books; a beautiful garden, and an abundantly healthy little boy, then a baby. They are the only people we met who seemed ideally fitted for a permanent

existence of the sort. This is because their own inner resources are inexhaustible. They are always finding something new and fascinating to do, and a new plant in the garden, a new set of beehives, a kit of tools for making linoleum blocks, a bit of plastic wood for puppet heads, a good book—these things keep them perpetually interested. Also they take part in many of the native activities and derive endless amusement from all the small happenings of the island. Med has his work on the plantation and Gladys has the house, the baby, and the garden to oversee. Compared to others their life is like a limpid stream that flows always in the sun, with barely a ripple. We came to love them deeply.

When we first went there, our bay boasted of two other westerners, Lord and Lady Hastings, he of England, she the daughter of an Italian countess. Afterwards, seeing the viscount in civilization, aristocratic, affable, and charming, we used to laugh at our South Sea introduction to him. The Kellums had invited us all to tea one afternoon to effect it formally, but Fate intervened. For the occasion we had hired the Chinaman's one-horse cart to take us the six kilometers by road to Oponohu—there were only two automobiles on the island—and as we rattled along we came suddenly on a young man who stood beside the road painting at an easel. He was dressed in a pair of shorts, an old shirt and a dejected straw hat; but there could be no doubt that he was the viscount, first because there was no other white man on this part of the island, and secondly because we knew him to be a painter. We passed within a couple feet of him and stopped to introduce ourselves, adding that we expected to see him at tea.

Instantly he became the frozen haughty Englishman of legend. In spite of his beach-comber's clothes, a vast formality and dignity enveloped him completely. His reply, like a stream of ice-water, informed us that he was painting, that the light

was now perfect, and that he could not be disturbed for tea. If I had been on my feet, I believe I should have clicked my heels together and answered, "Aye, aye, sir!" As it was, we rode on in a fine rage at his ineffable superiority.

When we arrived at the Kellums', however, and met Lady Hastings, who was very cordial to us, we were a trifle mollified, but not much. And when a few days later her house-boy came across the bay with a chit inviting us to dinner at their own very nice house below the mountain of Rotui, we even considered not going. But that seemed childish at last, and we went, thereby inaugurating a real friendship. For Lord Hastings, or Jack as we soon came to know him, was an entirely different man at his own table, a friendly cultivated man of shy and sensitive perceptions, and a true artist. It was in fact his very simplicity which had deceived us. His attitude towards his work is almost *quattrocento* in its devotion and painstaking labor. It was not long before we knew that what he had told us on the road was the exact truth. He *was* painting; the light *was* perfect, and he *could not* be disturbed. The English hauteur had nothing to do with it; only the painter spoke.

After that we saw much of them and liked them more and more. But after two months they left for America, where Jack worked with the Mexican artist Diego Rivera, and did some very interesting murals for the Century of Progress in Chicago.

One evening Zane Grey's yacht the *Fisherman 2nd* or *3rd*, I forget which, hove in to our bay. This yacht, they told us, had once belonged to the German Kaiser and had a hull all of monel metal. But she was certainly a sight when we saw her! Zane Grey himself had come out on the steamer, leaving his fourteen-year-old son and his two secretaries, one dark and serious and one blond and gay, to accompany the yacht from San Francisco. On the way out the blond secretary—who must

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have had a domestic temperament—had discovered in the hold a number of crates of wilting vegetables, and with housewifely devotion had thought they would be better in the air. So she had pressed the crew into service and had had the vegetables all strung up, a cabbage on one string, a head of lettuce on another, a bunch of carrots on a third. They were strung along both sides of the two lower decks and hung just above the railings like a grotesque bead curtain which swung out and in every time the ship rolled. Add to this that the yacht had at that time a serious permanent list. Nothing more drunken in the line of boats can be imagined. After Grey himself had been aboard a day or so the vegetables all came down. But we didn't care for the yacht even then. She kept spewing out over the pellucid waters of our Eden vast amounts of filthy garbage which floated disgustingly to our own beach. She was very comfortably equipped inside though, as we saw when we were invited aboard.

Since I seem to be speaking first about the westerners, I may as well include several others; for though we met very few, practically all of them interested us. Everyone who lives there is eccentric in some fashion, as we ourselves are, and by far the most dramatic stories are to be found among them.

The other two English-speaking whites on Moorea, Robert Dean Frisbie and "Jonsey," were both typical South Sea dwellers gone completely native. But they were saved from being beach-combers by the fact that Frisbie is a writer of talent, author of *The Book of Puka Puka* and other volumes, and that Jones is an excellent chemist. Otherwise they lived the life of many white men in a degenerative climate, with native women and their progeny, living chiefly on beer that Jones brewed, and on rum punches. How they stood it as well as they did, I could never understand. But I liked them both.

Frisbie had lived for several years, the only white man, on

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the remote island of Puka Puka, and his book about it is the real article. His native woman—a heavy dull creature, I found her—was the Desire who is painted so enticingly there. But that experience and others had left him with a peculiar combination of intellectual sophistication and almost childlike naïveté. In some ways he was a babe in arms. Yet, next to Jonsey he had the most ribald tongue I have ever heard.

One evening when I happened to be alone in Papeete I ran into Frisbie, sober for once as to alcohol, but positively drunk on excitement. He took me into the little park beside the lagoon and informed me that he had just signed up for the rum-running business.

Perhaps I would better explain. About that time a huge bootlegging ring—as hard-boiled people as ever lived—had decided that Tahiti would be a good base for operations. It had advantages over Mexico as headquarters in spite of its distance from the United States. Coming from so far and over such lonely waters, the rum-running boats could appear anywhere on the west coast without being spotted by government officials or hijackers beforehand, a thing impossible for coast-wise shipping. The liquor, part of which came from Canada and part from France, was cleared at the port of Papeete, where it was kept in a warehouse over which Jones presently presided, to be sent on later. Although this particular method of approach was new, the bootleg ring was old and well-established, and we heard hair-raising tales of the sluggers they employed to prevent hijacking and to fight the government men, and of the high-handed way they disposed of anyone who betrayed them.

So now Frisbie informed me that he was going to the United States on the first schooner of the new beat as captain—he had his navigation papers—or mate or supercargo or something. I never knew rightly which. But what caught him was the won-

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derful literary material it would make. "Think what a marvellous book I can get out of it!" he said, his eyes shining like coals in the tropic moonlight. "This stuff has never been done before, and it is high time it was. It will be the most interesting material I have ever found!" I thought to myself that it had never been done because nobody could do it without being bumped off, but aloud I said: "But, Frisbie, will they like to have their secrets published? What will you do about that?" "Oh," he said simply, "when I have enough material I will resign!"

Well—the last we knew of Frisbie, he did in fact set out on their first boat, a small, not too seaworthy schooner so deeply loaded with liquor that the decks were almost awash. I was not in Papeete when she sailed, but they told me that the whole town saw them off, and that all the whistles and sirens were blowing in farewell as she sailed out of the harbor. I do not think the book ever appeared, though it is hard to keep track of all the books published now, and we never heard the end of the story. Probably by the time he knew the ring better he decided against writing it. Or perhaps he just never got around to it, in the ineffectual way things have of petering out in the islands. Certainly the affair didn't end in tragedy, for recently Frisbie has published a charming volume called *My Tahiti*.

As for Jonsey, he stayed on as the Tahiti end of the same ring. Without exception he was the most Rabelaisian human I have ever met, not even excepting Edgar Lee Masters. He showed me a poem once which he had written that was beyond anything I could have imagined, though I have read much of the good pornography of the world. Dirt for its own sake never interested me, but good literature on these subjects does. Jonsey's was pretty good. And he was in some ways a most lovable old reprobate. He stood by me once in a squab-



ble I had there in a way which has endeared him to me for life.

On Tahiti itself we knew few people. Dr. and Mrs. Williams we knew, and Mrs. Gouverneur Morris—Morris was not there himself at the time—Countess Cardelli and her son, who stayed awhile on Moorea at the inn, Robert Flaherty, who was at that time filming *Tabu*, and whom we had known one summer when we were in Santa Fe, and a few others. But we saw little of them.

Charles Nordhoff we knew slightly. He had crossed on the boat with us from San Francisco, an embittered unhappy man and a thoroughgoing pessimist. Everywhere he looked he saw only sorrow, terror, and bitterness. In Tahiti we saw him only by accident, for he goes very little with the whites. I believe both he and James Norman Hall have suffered through the stupid and provincial race prejudice of these same whites; for they have both married half-caste wives, half French and half Tahitian and very charming, I am told, though I never met either of them. They live apart and seldom appear with their husbands. Both men have children.

Norman Hall is as different from Nordhoff as day is from night. A sweeter, more friendly, and rarer soul never lived. His eyes are limpid pools of human goodness and his fine and sensitive intelligence has something childlike, in the best sense, about it.

One day when we were lunching together at the Tiara Tahiti, the famous old hotel in Papeete, he told us of his experiences in New York, from which he had recently returned, trying to sell the manuscript of a play he and Nordhoff had written together. He had failed to interest any producer in it. "One of my friends did offer to put up thirty thousand dollars for a production," he said. "But this man was not a theatrical man.

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He didn't know the ropes. He might have lost his money. So of course I couldn't let him do it!" The recent tremendous success he and Nordhoff have had with *Mutiny on the Bounty* and the rest, and with *The Hurricane*, has delighted us immeasurably. We have never met anyone we would rather see succeed than Norman Hall.

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### Our South Sea Island—The Natives

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THOUGH we were interested in the foreigners, the natives were our constant source of amusement and pleasure. This is another place where I have to practice restraint, or I should be talking of them far into the night! Such a simple good-natured people of overgrown children! The young ones were always wandering about with wreaths of sweet-smelling flowers on their heads, and ukuleles or guitars in their hands, laughing and making love. For Tahiti (and Moorea also) has been known ever since Cook called there as "The Island of Love." The whole culture pattern is founded on it. When the youngsters get to be fourteen or fifteen they have finished their simple schooling, and they are released from the little labor done on the island and expected to enjoy themselves—which they certainly do! They splash in the lagoon or bathe in the clear little brooks, and laugh. They make elaborate wreaths and necklaces of flowers, and laugh. They amuse themselves fishing for shrimp in the streams, they listen to the phonograph, they sing endless ribald songs, for the most part set to western music—when we were there the favorite tune was "When It's Springtime in the Rockies"—they dance the hula, they wander in pairs and parties through the coconuts, laughing. And always they make love. Lovers come and go for

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the girls with the ease and sparkle of the tropic showers that slant down from the green mountains. Jealousy is practically unknown among them. Virginity is simply childishness. No girl is really out in society till she has had her first baby, whom mama at home tends as a matter of course.

Then, when they are twenty or so, some lover among the many appeals to them as more desirable than the others, and the two settle down together, often for life. They almost never bother to go through the marriage ceremony, in spite of the constant urging of the French. Not more than three or four couples in the village, I believe, were legally married, but they were essentially so all the same. They lived together placidly and raised families of children. The old chief was the most respected man in the village and had the greatest authority. He himself had gone through the French ceremony, but his daughters had not. One of them was a billowy middle-aged woman with several children, and once in speaking to the chief I called her *tane*, her man, by the French word *mari*. The old man interrupted me. "No," he said, "Etua is not her husband. I have told him several times that he ought to marry her. But Etua only laughs."

He only laughs! That is the native answer to most of the difficulties of living. They have a phrase, *Aita peapeau*, "It doesn't matter," with which they greet grief when it comes to them. They cry a little, pleasantly and painlessly, then they laugh again. Laughter is always coming from the houses and cookhouses, from the gardens and lagoons in bursts of silvery gayety, like a leitmotif of the island. We still miss the sound in our ears.

Their attitude towards children is of a piece with their attitude towards love. Everyone seems to have an indiscriminate affection for every child, without regard to whose child it is. They often give away their children to relatives or friends,

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not because they do not love them but to do a kindness to the receiver. If a family has four children in the house, two of these are likely to have been born to them, one the child of a sister who lives in a neighboring village, and one belonging to a friend, while one or two of their own are elsewhere. The family next to us, about a quarter of a mile away, was overflowing with young folk, though not a single one rightfully belonged there.

While we were on Moorea, Med Kellum's house-boy, a fine upstanding young chap, took to himself a vahine who presently produced a fine boy. Tuu was as proud as Punch, borrowed his salary for several months in advance and threw a great feast for everyone in the village. Afterwards he said to Med, "Etua, who is my best friend, has asked for the child. But"—here he became distinctly apologetic—"he is my first son, and the vahine wants to keep him. I—I told Etua 'No.' But of course I promised him the next child!"

It was with the children, and especially the little boys, that we first became really acquainted, and this through Marshall who was then nine, and the first white child ever to have lived on the island, except the Kellums' baby. The native children were naturally terribly curious to know what he was like.

We had by this time acquired a native girl to cook for us, one Caroline, a small person with some Maori blood, eyes as black as shoe-buttons and a wicked hip in the hula. When we unpacked Marshall's clothes, she found among them a cowboy suit, complete with lariat and sombrero, which we had bought on the way out when we stopped at Cheyenne for a rodeo. Never did an accidental acquisition stand us in such good stead! Caroline said at once, "Tonight is cinema night, and he must wear this." "All right," said I, "but why?" "You will see!" was all the little minx would answer.

Once a week, we discovered, a beautiful young half-caste

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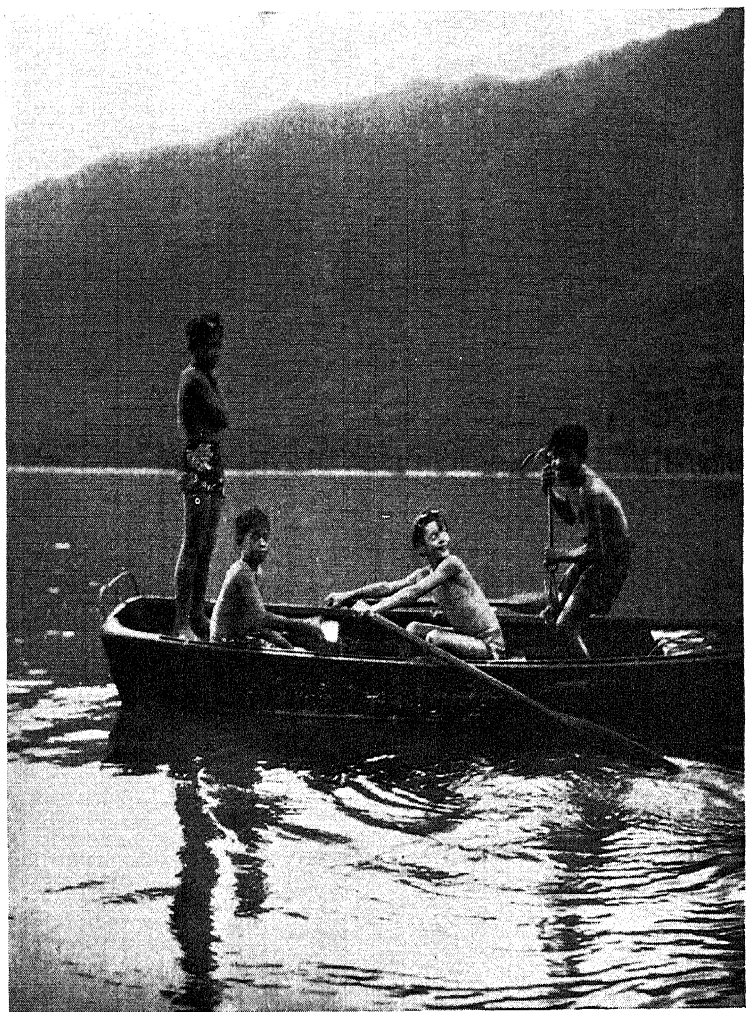
called "Sonny" came from Maharapa with an old-fashioned acetylene movie projector, worked by hand. This he set up in a building of woven bamboo slats, and the entire village assembled to watch news reels at least three years old and reckless "westerns."

This night we walked the mile and a half through the fragrant starlit night and sat us down on the hard benches among the villagers. Every eye in the place was on Marshall. When Tom Mix strode on to the screen we understood: they thought the child was a real cowboy!

All the little boys followed us a half-mile on the homeward way, and by seven o'clock the next morning we awoke to find at least forty of them gathered about the house waiting for him to come out. Each one of them had cocked his homemade pandanus fibre hat on one side, had carved himself a pistol out of wood, and had acquired a long length of a tropical vine a half-inch thick, to serve as a lariat. So behold a whole potential rodeo!

Marshall was a bit daunted. But in his wanderings he had acquired quite a technique of playing with children whom he could not understand, and he rose to the occasion nobly. He put on his cowboy suit, grasped his lariat—his cheeks very pink—and sauntered out. He did, after all, understand a little of the principle of the lariat and he taught them all diligently. For weeks, whenever I went out of the house, a long snakelike vine was likely to drop from a coconut tree over my head. Fortunately there were almost no horses, and so he did not have to demonstrate his prowess as a rider.

In exchange for this information the boys taught him to swim and to paddle a canoe. The lagoon in front of the house was always full of little brown bodies that glistened in the sun. Very soon Marshall himself was so brown that only up close could I distinguish him from the others. And it seemed



LITTLE BROWN BODIES ON THE LAGOON IN MOOREA.  
MARSHALL IS ONE OF THEM

(Photo by Head)





## OUR SOUTH SEA ISLAND—THE NATIVES

no time at all till he was swimming like a sea-otter, turning and twisting under water and poking his nose into the cracks in the coral as the fishes did. Or he was riding in on the breakers in the canoe, turning it aside in the last second when disaster seemed certain.

This reminds me of something that happened later, when we had returned to the United States and had put Marshall in a summer camp. The child swam as the Polynesians swim, as easily as though the water were his native element, but without splashing or unnecessary flurry. It would seem absurd to our Mooreans to rush along like steam engines as we do when we swim, working hard to acquire speed alone, splashing and thrusting through the water with the maximum of noise and the minimum of enjoyment. Animals never do that unless they are running from danger, and these people are as much a part of nature as animals. Marshall swam silently, and not very fast, sometimes on the surface but more often under it. Like the natives he seldom dived formally; he simply slipped into the water the quickest and most efficient way.

Well—in this camp to which he went the next summer, the sports instructor was one of those super-energetic young fellows who have to be rushing athletically about all the time. He cared in swimming only for the loud crawl stroke and the formal dive. Water was something to be conquered noisily, not lived in. Marshall was confused by this, and never did manage the crawl as well as some of the others. It seemed silly to him. Nor did he star at diving. So the instructor concluded he couldn't swim!

As for canoeing, after a half-hour of necessary readjustment between the South Sea outrigger canoe and the Indian canoe, lighter and more affected by the wind, he got that down easily. But there was only a bit of smooth fenced-in water to paddle in and he soon tired of it. Too easy! Then he took to deviling

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the instructor, for which I could not blame him. I watched him one day bringing the canoe in to the dock where the man stood. He came straight towards the dock, full speed ahead. The man shouted and made frantic gestures, but Marshall didn't seem to hear or see him. Just at the last second the child slewed the canoe around with a great sweep of the paddle in a perfect landing. The instructor gave a sigh of relief. I could actually see him thinking, "That fool boy has had another lucky escape!" When it came to the final report for the summer he graciously admitted that the boy had succeeded in learning the first degree of swimming—he had won the final backstroke race, and so I suppose so much had to be admitted—but had never even got to first base with the canoe. What a laugh Cloyd and I had over that report card!

But to return to the island. Marshall made an especial friend of a little boy named Otu, the son of the assistant chief of the village, a handsome youngster with great brown eyes and almost blue-black hair. Otu taught him all the native accomplishments in other lines. These children have no machine-made toys, so they make their own out of nature's own materials. They carve all sorts of things out of the soft tropical woods, tops and pistols and bowie knives and spears; they make balls out of woven palm or pandanus fibre, and baskets and finger-catchers of the same; they make little toy carts to drag behind them, using round candlenuts as wheels; and wonderful throwing toys out of small green coconuts into which they insert the stripped midriff of a palm frond to steady it, as we put feathers on arrows.

When Christmas came I went in to Papeete and bought Marshall a French scooter, one of those things you stand on with one foot and propel with the other. It was the first ever seen on the island, and a nine days' wonder to the boys. To my surprise it took them quite a while to learn this new trick

of balancing. Marshall and Otu grew tired of helping them for nothing, and took to charging them ten pieces of shell a scoot. Now these pieces of shell, about the size of a nickel but rounded on one side into a dome, were the common form of currency among the boys, rather as marbles are here. Indeed they used them for their own equivalent of matching pennies and for other things. It took a boy perhaps fifteen minutes on the beach to collect a dozen of them. After the scooter had been in vogue for two weeks Marshall and Otu had collected a whole packing box of these shells and were enormously wealthy, by far the most plutocratic in the village.

Then the rest of the boys—who had surely never heard of European finance—very simply and sensibly did the inevitable thing. They went off the gold standard! Another kind of shell was chosen as currency, and our youngsters, now poor again, eventually had to use their shells to fill the land-crab holes in the yard when they wanted to make a Tom Thumb golf course.

Presently we lost Caroline, who was far too young and gay to cook consistently for anyone who did not sleep with her, and acquired Teura instead. I loved Teura on sight and adopted her for a friend. I don't think it ever occurred to her to consider herself my servant, any more than it occurred to me to think of her in that light. She was in the middle twenties, with three children to her credit, though of course she had never been legally married, and her most important *tane* had been put out of the house as a loafer by her father. Teura's father was the brother of the chief, the best cook for miles around, and a fine upstanding man whom everybody respected. He was slightly westernized too, and had seen to it that his daughters spoke very adequate French and knew foreign cooking.

Teura was good-looking in her own warm way, with melt-

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ing brown eyes and masses of wavy hair in which she always wore flowers. She was too fat, but what of that? She was extraordinarily light on her feet, had the sunniest disposition imaginable, and was generally beloved. Everybody who passed on the road stopped at the cookhouse to speak to her, and gusts of laughter and the twanging of guitars and ukuleles came from the place all day long. Through her we made friends with the villagers and derived infinite amusement.

There was for instance Temui, a grandson of the chief, the Protestant clergyman of Papetoai. It seems the old clergyman had died, and for two years before we got there the village had worried along with a lay preacher, waiting for Temui who was studying at the French theological seminary in Papeete. Soon after we came he was formally ordained in a great ceremony which thrilled everybody. The villagers had erected a huge open shelter, thatched with palm leaves, in the public square, and for many nights we all ate together there at long tables. Afterwards the natives sang the conventional *hymene*, and propounded the Scriptures in a curious constantly varying rhythm which, oddly enough, had more genuine Polynesian background than their songs. When the day arrived, thirty-seven seasick clergymen came by the *Mitiaro*, three French and the rest natives from other islands. The ceremony was held outdoors and was quite impressive, ending with ceremonial kissing all around, as among the early Christians.

They told us that before Temui left Moorea he had been very gay and amusing, but now he was properly grave and subdued and wore a cloak of conscious dignity. He was still in the early twenties, but everyone deferred to him. About three weeks after the ceremony he had the execrable luck to fall out of a breadfruit tree, and thereby initiated us into the mysteries of native medicinal healing.



PORTRAIT OF TEURA OF MOOREA, PAINTED BY E. T.

(Photo by Head)



## OUR SOUTH SEA ISLAND—THE NATIVES

It seems he fell in a sitting-down position from a considerable height, and injured himself seriously. He broke a number of ribs, sprained his back dangerously, and hurt himself internally. The villagers were horrified. Their new clergyman, injured while in the beneficent occupation of gathering food for his wife and child! It was too much. For nights, while he hovered between life and death, practically the whole population stood outside his house and wept aloud.

But they not only wept, they acted. They did not send to Tahiti for a foreign doctor, though one might have been fetched in a day, but put the case into the hands of two wise women, healers, of the village. What these women did about it left us weak with surprise. They at once divided up the helpers. Some they sent to fetch a very large old canoe without an outrigger, and to fill it with water from the nearest stream, the coldest to be had. The others they sent into the hills to gather simples. When these had arrived, they put the herbs in the water and then took poor broken Temui and laid him gently in the canoe. He was very nearly dead, and the water really cold. They left him there till his face turned purple, and both he and they thought he would die if the treatment were continued. Then they took him out and stretched him carefully, in the way he should go, on a mat on the floor. Twice a day they did this.

And Temui recovered! We heard all the details. That he had stopped spitting blood, that he had developed a huge lump over his solar plexus. That he could eat now. That the lump had gone down. That the ribs were knitting. In three weeks Temui was walking up the Broom Road in Papeete as good as new!

But it seems that Temui was not meant to be a clergyman after all. He has been dropped from the fold now. "Tahitian

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blood and desires were stronger," wrote Gladys Kellum in her last letter. I am glad the poor confused lad has found himself at last.

I saw another bit of native medicine in action one day when Teura and I were walking up the road about four miles from home. We heard a child crying in a garden near by, and a woman came running out and called us in. There stood a small boy, hardly bigger than a baby, with the first phalange of the pointer finger of his left hand chopped off clean. He had been playing with a *machete*! The stump had just stopped bleeding and evidently the first pain had passed, for he gave over crying, held up the stump and seemed to feel rather important, considering all the people who crowded around him. I debated with myself. Should I walk the additional eight miles home and back in the tropic heat, to get antiseptics and tie it up, or should I let them handle it?

Before I reached a decision, the matter was taken out of my hands. A Chinese, one of the two who had an orange grove near by, had come into the yard following us. Now I noticed him walking about the yard picking leaves off the bushes and putting them in his mouth. I wished afterwards that I had noticed what bushes they were, but at the time I paid no attention. These leaves he chewed up till they made a green mash. Suddenly, without a word to anyone, he went up to the child, took the mash out of his mouth and clapped it like a poultice on the stump of the finger. The mother took it perfectly calmly and tied a rag over the green mess. "Now," I thought, "the child is done for!" But not at all! A week later I passed that way again and looked at the finger. It was completely healed, and the best modern medicine could not have made a neater job. So much for therapy.

We had another friend in Mahini. He was a lovable old reprobate, thoroughly dishonest, generous, drunken, and friendly.



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He spoke fairly decent French, had a certain concept of time, which the other natives had not, and was pretty reliable. If he said he would come for us in his little one-horse rattletrap, he came—which was more than could be said of most of the other natives, who might come when needed, or might happen along the next day, or not at all. And he usually stayed to drink a bit with us. The best story about Mahini, however, did not happen to us, but to an earlier American who had lived in the village. This man hired Mahini to buy him a flock of chickens and to build a pen for them. The pen filled rapidly, and the man paid Mahini as the fowl arrived. But one day the whole village descended upon the pen and vociferously took away all but one scrawny rooster. Mahini had simply helped himself wherever he chose! He was, it seems, quite roundly scolded by the *mutoi*, the gentle native policeman, but nothing more was done about it. He used occasionally to present us with a chicken, and once he brought a small suckling pig. We asked no questions on these occasions, food being irregular and hard to come by, but ate them at once. Even a Moorean can hardly recognize the bones of his piggies.

One of the most important men in the village, head of the fishing fleet, was a man who shall be called Ted Harding. He was a half-caste, English and Tahitian, and not a bad sort, in spite of his deep-lying inferiority complex. He had once been sent to technical school in the States, but could not make the grade among straight Caucasians. Here on Moorea, however, his English blood gave him stamina enough to be an acknowledged leader. But I never have ceased to think of the problem his existence must create for a certain English earl, who must be well on in years, holder of one of the oldest earldoms in the kingdom.

But perhaps I would better tell first what manner of man Ted Harding is. When we had just arrived on Moorea and were

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staying at the inn, two young men tourists wanted to drive over to a village named Temae to see the dancers and amuse themselves generally. They asked Bill Wainwright to collect some girls for them, which he did, and among the four whom he picked up happened to be Ted Harding's vahine, a pleasant young person who lived with Harding and had a baby by him. The three men and the four girls drove off in the one local automobile and were gone from noon till dinner time.

When they returned the girls were deposited in the village. There was Harding waiting in the middle of the street for his vahine. He waited till the white men had gone to dinner and then put on a towering scene for the entire native population. You see his English blood made him a prey to our western jealousy, but gave him no clue as to what to do about it. Now he went into a hysterical rage, called the girl every name he could think of, and ended by tearing off all her clothes in the street. He did not, however, send her away.

His later explanation of the event to a white man he knew on Tahiti, however, is even more illuminating. He knew that this man would have heard the story, which went the round of the islands in record time by "coconut radio," and he felt it incumbent on him to explain. Remember that he had been living openly with the vahine for over a year and had often spoken to this friend about her and his child.

"I was obliged to be very rough the other day to one of the village girls," he said. "This girl has been very impudent of late, and the other day she had the effrontery to go to the Chinese shopkeeper and buy some cloth for a dress which she charged to me—to me, Ted Harding! Think of the insolence! I was naturally furious and tore the dress off her in the street, in order to teach her not to be familiar with me!"

Well—here is the story as it was told to us, and a beautiful yarn it is. It seems that Harding senior was the second son of

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this English earl, and that he had quarrelled with his family and moved out to Tahiti many years before, where he had married an admirable native woman. We knew them slightly. He was a small gentle oldish Englishman who had lived so long with the natives that he seemed half Polynesian himself. But he was obviously of good birth and well educated. He knew more of the early history of the islands, their legends and folk-lore, their geology, etc., than anyone we met. He lived and dressed as simply as any native, and had only once gone back to England, he told us. But one day he showed us casually a photograph of a most magnificent custom-built automobile, costing several thousand pounds, which he said he had recently had made for his London solicitors "because of loyal service."

The story goes on to say that the eldest son of the earl had died, leaving only one grandson born in England to succeed to the title, since Ted's father would have none of it; but that this grandson was mentally unbalanced. We were told that in such a case the primogeniture can be passed over if the earl wishes. But his only other choice was Ted Harding, a half-caste South Sea islander with such a psychological set-up! The earl, we were told, had nevertheless several times demanded that Ted come to England to be looked over, but he had steadfastly fought shy of playing Little Lord Fauntleroy. At all events, whether the story is true or not, it presents a problem fit for any dramatist. I am surprised that Cloyd Head has not written it.

One of the most interesting events of the year in Papetoai is the communal fishing which occurs in the autumn, that is to say, in March. The marine life of the lagoon and the bay varies in certain respects with the seasons as the fish move about, following the feeding grounds. For instance, once a year a female whale comes from somewhere, no one knows where,

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to have a baby. She stays in the bay till the young one is able to follow her, and then she goes away. All the natives watch for her, but nobody seems to molest her. In the autumn, too, great schools of a small silver fish, about eight or ten inches long, come into the bay to feed. It is these who suffer in the communal fishing.

When the school is first sighted all the natives get together and sew their nets end to end, making a huge affair several hundred feet long. Then they gather at Oponohu and wait till a lookout posted in a tall palm gives notice that the fish are in the proper position. The great net is then stretched by means of canoes across the end of the bay, thus imprisoning the fish, and the fun begins.

Two long ropes are tied to the ends of the net and all the women and children, with a few men, wade in to their armpits and begin to haul it in, in a great curve. The net catches often on rocks and plants on the bottom. Then men dive in and loosen it while the women rest. The process takes a whole day, and is conducted with endless laughing and singing. The two ends usually reach shore about dusk.

The next process is to kill the big predatory fish that have followed the smaller fry into the net. Several canoes are put inside the great half-circle, and men with flares of coconut fronds and fish-spears set about the task. One evening we saw them kill a shark, a huge ray, and a number of smaller but dangerous fish.

Towards dusk, as the ends of the net came to the shore, I had noticed that several of my women friends had tied an extra *pareo* about their waists. I wondered why. Then I saw them wriggling in the water with such spasms of hysterical laughter that I knew something was afoot. Presently I found out. The fish, it seems, being caught in common, are public property and nobody is supposed to take any for his own use

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before the division is made. But everybody does. Now the single *pareo* which the women habitually wear has no pockets and no place to conceal anything. Hence the extra one, which, tied tight about the waist, made the upper part of the first one into a receptacle of sorts. The women had each surreptitiously taken several fish, and had stuffed them into this pocket. But live fish are a singularly unattractive lining for lingerie! Giggling is the least one can do about it. The men put theirs into the folds of the *pareo* around the waist, where it is worn as a loincloth.

After the big fish were killed, they called a halt for supper, and the people separated into little groups. Each group went to a considerable distance from the next, in order that the elders of the village might not notice their contraband fish. But actually nobody seemed to care. Only those who are too greedy are stopped.

The scene was extraordinarily picturesque. There was an enormous tropic moon which silvered the water and the rustling palm fronds on the shore, and showed us dimly the outline of Muaroa, that startlingly beautiful peak at the end of the bay, and of Rotui nearer at hand. All about through the coconuts were the little fires where supper was being cooked; and the air was filled with snatches of song and the tinkling of ukuleles, and laughter.

Afterwards the men took a smaller net and dipped it inside the big pegged one, filling it again and again with the imprisoned fish. As these were taken out, they were dumped into an old canoe, where they jumped and struggled with a silvery sound. I have never been able to forget that sound, heard thus under the moon. It was something like the patter of rain and something like a great number of small brushes passing over metal. It rose and fell as the men added more fish. Later the fish were strung, everybody helping, into the conventional

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string to be sold in Papeete, and the resulting money divided. There were enough left in the big net for five or six nights. It was past midnight when the still laughing groups straggled back to the village.

This communal fishing reminds me of the latest episode in my plump Teura's own story, which I heard by letter recently. During the many months she lived with me, I had known all about her love affairs; for there is no use, even if one wished to, in trying to conceal anything on the islands. The very trees seem to be microphones for the coconut radio, which can spread news of an event throughout an entire island within an hour after it happens. And on any score there is nothing secretive about the island temperament. So I had watched Teura through several affairs. Once a man to whom she was really devoted left her for another without a word of explanation. She wept for fully five minutes, sighed, said "*Aita peapeau*," and reached for her ukulele. Jealousy was simply not in her.

But not long after we left she took up with a very fine young chap who was made overseer of Kellums' plantation, one of the best positions on the island, and went to live at Oponohu. She was perfectly happy there and at peace. But suddenly, after about a year, to everybody's surprise she and her *tane* announced that they were going to be married, legally married with all the frills. They gave a great feast to celebrate the occasion. I wish we might have been there! At the party the Kellums asked her why they had done it, and she answered, laughing, "Well, you see, we had a fine little pig, just perfect for roasting, and we wanted to give a big feast, but we couldn't think of an excuse—until we thought of getting married."

But alas for our vaunted western ethics! They have been the ruination of Teura. No sooner was she legally married to her *tane* than she began to be furiously jealous of him. Obviously so great an event must make *some* difference, and what else

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could she do about it? Last March the jolly communal fishing went on almost at her very doorstep, but Teura and her husband were not there. She had locked him in his room in the house because there were "too many vahine" at the fishing, and had laid her great bulk across the door to make sure that he did not get out! To such a pass had a marriage certificate brought the poor girl!

No account of our life on Moorea would be complete without the *tupapaus*, the spirits. The natives do not distinguish between them very carefully; they seem to be sometimes the ghosts of the departed, but more often the spirits of the ancient Polynesian gods or their high-priests, or perhaps of elementals. They are most powerful during the three nights of the full moon, but occasionally they are seen or heard at other times, and endless stories are told about them. Officially nobody believes in their existence. If you ask a native whom you do not know very well about them, he will invariably giggle and answer as the French have taught him to answer, "There aren't any *tupapaus*!" You answer dutifully, "Of course there aren't any, but—" And then you go on to tell some story you have heard. In five minutes he will be capping it with one of his own. Most of the stories involve nothing more dynamic than the appearance of strange people known not to be on the island; of *tiki*, stone idols, that weep at night; of showers of stones that fall by no human hand on the roofs; and of forewarnings of death by the appearance of some supernatural form. Occasionally one will be more sinister. On the road not far from us, a while before we arrived, two young men were riding together on a single horse, when a *tupapau* in the form of an unknown old hag appeared suddenly in the road and grabbed at the bridle. The horse reared, throwing his riders and breaking the neck of one of them. There was a *tupapau* which inhabited a huge and very ancient banyan tree beside

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the parsonage on the way between our house and the village. It had the form of a great bull, and had been seen several times. Even in daytime people looked askance at this tree, and Teura always had to have someone walk home with her in the evening, for fear of it. On the one or two occasions when she was obliged to pass there alone, she told me that only the light in the clergyman's window saved her! And her reaction was typical. No native, however emancipated, will walk abroad alone at night short of direct necessity, especially at full moon. When they are obliged to do so, they almost run, whistling or singing loudly to keep up their courage. Men and women are alike in this.

I had one experience with a *tupapau* myself not long before we left. It isn't much of a story—almost every white person who has lived there a long time can match it—but it is my very own, so I know it to be true; and I insist on telling it.

It didn't come for a long while though, in spite of the fact that I had been hoping for something of the sort. Astronomy has always fascinated me, and I was much interested in the stars from Moorea, where they rise conveniently in the east and set in the west, without skittering around the sky in the disconcerting fashion they have up north, and I had walked along the road for hours at a stretch at every hour of the night without seeing so much as the tail of a *tupapau*. Neither did I see a human being. When it came finally I was least expecting it, which is the way with these denizens of another world.

Cloyd had gone over to Papeete that night and Teura slept in the village, so Marshall and I were alone in the house. About ten o'clock, after he had been long asleep, I was reading on the back porch with a kerosene lamp beside me. This back porch was very small, and the table at which I read was backed up against the screen, which was rusty, like everything else there. Outside the house, and within a foot of it, ran a



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path of crushed coral. I was at most five feet from the path where it passed me, but in spite of the full moon I could not see it then because the lamplight fell on the rusty fly-screen and made a wall of it.

Suddenly as I sat I heard a man coming around the house on the coral walk. He came very slowly and deliberately, stepping firmly, his feet crunching on the prickly stuff. It was someone in bare feet or at most wearing sneakers; at all events without leather soles. I knew the sound well. It could not be mistaken for anything else. There were no animals except dogs or a stray pig, and they sounded very different.

The steps came slowly down the side of the house, turning the corner of the porch at the back, and stopped directly in front of me. But no one spoke. I wondered rapidly who it could be. It could not be a native; that was impossible. They never wandered at full moon. But if it were Med Kellum or Bill Wainwright, he would have hallooed, having taken the trouble to walk out into the country to see me. Even the sailors of the *Mitiaro*, who were somewhat westernized and might have been more courageous than the others, were in Papeete along with Cloyd. Who could it conceivably be? I thought of speaking to ask what it was about; but some stupid western caution, remembering that I was alone with a child a quarter of a mile from the nearest human, made me wait till I should be spoken to.

But silence continued. Then on an impulse I reached over and turned out the lamp. Instantly the back yard sprang into view as a scene springs out in the theatre. The moon was so bright that I could see every smallest detail. The path was directly in front of me, in full view. But there was nobody on it!

I was flabbergasted. What in thunder! I seized a powerful flashlight which lay beside me and, holding it against the screen, threw its beams through the mesh. They gave an addi-

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tional illumination to the nearest coffee bushes, but still nothing was there. "Well," I said to myself, "you must have imagined the footsteps. That is the only possible explanation."

But even as I thought this, the footsteps began again. From right before me, from the very spot where the flashlight still pointed, they started, walking as slowly as they had come, and passed around the end of the porch and so towards the road. I heard them as distinctly as I have heard anything in my life. For an instant I was too surprised to move. Then I thought suddenly, "*A tupapau* at last!" I was not in the least frightened, only delighted. I dashed out of the back door, which was close beside the table, only a few feet behind the footsteps. I flashed the light into the shadows below the bushes and ran up and down the road. No human being was anywhere.

I heard afterwards that these footsteps are one of the most common forms of such manifestations, and even a number of whites have heard them. So it isn't really much of a story. But how do you account for them—if there aren't any *tupapaus*?

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## *I Stop Talking*

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WE GOT back from Moorea to find a very different city from the one we had left. The depression had dug itself in by this time. People were beginning to realize that it was to be a long pull; reserves were diminishing alarmingly; there was terror in the eyes one passed on the street, and a stark reality swept our South Sea paradise behind us as fast as the wake of a great steamer sweeps away into limbo.

Well, we survived somehow. But our love for the tropics had a definite aftermath. When an opportunity came to teach at the University of Miami, in Florida, we took it gladly. For two years we taught there, I in the English and Cloyd in the Dramatics department. After we resigned from the University, we had taken such a taste for Coconut Grove that we continued to live there. It is not quite Moorea, but it is second cousin to it at least, a fine and casual life, with the intellectual pabulum which Moorea lacks. But we feel tanking up in us the desire for far places again. Whenever there is a slack moment Cloyd and I have our noses in the atlas, looking up Allahabad or Teheran or Ur of the Chaldees. Some day, some day . . .

But this, I feel, is the place to stop talking.

A book, I have discovered, cannot get down a life as it is. At most a book is a skeleton, unclothed in flesh. So much es-

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capacities. And after the passage of years only the outward facts remain solid and able to be grasped. The shifting pattern of psychology one may have had five years ago, or ten, or thirty, can come back only in snatches, in its most vivid phases. It would have to be fictionized to be re-created as a whole, and, though I know that such fictionizing of oneself is fashionable now, I have chosen to stick to the demonstrably true.

Then too life—my life, at any rate—does not build itself up architecturally into the proper climaxes and anticlimaxes necessary for a work of art. It just goes bumbling along, falling into holes and climbing out of them, toiling up mountains and sliding down the other side, getting caught in national and world whirlpools, and generally acting in a most unpredictable manner. Of only one thing I am reasonably certain. Whatever happens, it is sure to interest me. So, since there can be no proper ending for this book, I may as well stop here.

If there has been up to now any coherent pattern in the outward events of my life I have not recognized it, any more in the writing than in the living. I see of course that it follows the psychological trend of the primitive song, which goes from tension to rest, instead of the arbitrarily built-up trend of more sophisticated poetry, which goes from rest to tension. But this is surely the pattern of human life, and integrity demands that it be followed. Otherwise, more personally speaking, the pattern is still no more than that of my sorcerer's string. I have tried to set down the chain as I found it, putting down scrupulously the strange convoluted shells, the bit of money, the fish of curiously wrought silver, the old pants button, the rusty key, and the blob of veined turquoise. As for the inner meaning of the string as a whole, the reason for its making—which I have perhaps recognized—I am still western enough, in spite of a strong oriental bias, to believe that it is strictly my own problem. Unless it has shown through in spite of me . . .

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